# *PLAYS OF THE YEAR*

*Volume 6*

1951

# PLAYS OF THE YEAR

CHOSEN BY
J. C. TREWIN

*SAINT'S DAY*
*John Whiting*

*THE PRODIGIOUS SNOB*
*Miles Malleson*

*THE SAME SKY*
*Yvonne Mitchell*

*WHO GOES THERE!*
*John Dighton*

*GUNPOWDER, TREASON AND PLOT*
*Hugh Ross Williamson*

VOLUME 6

1951

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*FOR WENDY*

*Who Understands*

# INTRODUCTION

*The facts about the appearance of* SAINT'S DAY *in London are clear. The Arts Theatre Club held a play competition to mark the Festival of Britain. Nearly one thousand entries were received. From these the judges, Alec Clunes, Christopher Fry, and Peter Ustinov chose three, each of which was staged for a short run before the final decision.* SAINT'S DAY *was the last of the three to be performed. Critics attacked it ; but, on the next morning, the judges affirmed their faith in John Whiting's drama by awarding it the prize of £700. Presently several distinguished men of the theatre—among them Peter Brook, John Gielgud, and Tyrone Guthrie—wrote in its defence. No serious play within remembrance had driven so deep a trench between theatre-men and practising critics. In this volume we propose to let* SAINT'S DAY *speak for itself. To show the immediate impact of the piece upon one playgoer, I print below a conflation of the articles I wrote about it immediately after the production.*

## *I*

*While I was in Edinburgh at the end of the Festival, I turned with some anxiety to reviews of* SAINT'S DAY *at the Arts Theatre in London. Anxiety because this was the last of the three plays short-listed for the theatre's*

*Festival of Britain prize. The first and second had been bad—and, what is worse, dully bad. It was left now to John Whiting to vindicate the judges. The occasion was important. The Arts had had nearly one thousand entries ; most of the aspiring dramatists of the time could have competed. Here, then, we might expect reasonably to find some of our hopes for English playwriting in the years ahead. The third choice was the more exciting because its author had written* A Penny For a Song, *the fantasy now luminous in sunlight, now silvered in moonshine, that had failed to run at the Haymarket earlier in the year.*

*The failure of John Whiting's happy caprice had been one of the unexplained curiosities of the theatre. Delicate, imaginative, acted appreciatively, and produced with inventive grace by Peter Brook,* A Penny For a Song *had slipped out of the running early, while a messy-tawdry farce could point to more than* 200 *performances. Ill luck indeed. But now this SAINT'S DAY might confirm our faith in John Whiting and regain lost ground. So I opened the newspapers eagerly as we drove from Dirleton into Edinburgh, beside the morning-bright Firth, to catch the London train. And the result? A blank. The London critics had not told their love : they had treated the play with derision. It was absurd, pretentious, turgid, the worst of the trio. What was the Arts doing? What was the future of English drama?*

*That morning, while we sped down towards the Border, I re-read the reviews and asked whether the piece could have been as odd as the previous choices : that portentous affair about a Judas-author who treated literary composition as a highly self-conscious ritual, and that even sillier play about a Soho gangster-den where folk spent breakfast-time potting at each other from behind sofas. SAINT'S DAY, they said, was worse ; it was hard to credit. Then I came upon a paragraph announcing that the Arts judges, in the teeth of criticism, had awarded John Whiting the prize. It was a bold gesture, an honest gesture. Here was paradox : a coveted award going to one of the worst-slated plays of its time.*

*Next afternoon, in the Arts Theatre, at the uncomfortable betwixt-and-between hour of five o'clock, I waited for SAINT'S DAY to declare itself. The theatre was less than half full, the atmosphere hardly sympathetic. The play began: its scene a room, shabby and spacious, in Paul Southman's house somewhere in England on the twenty-fifth of January. Why this insistence on a date? According to my diary, it was the anniversary of the conversion of St. Paul.*

*Half an hour or so later, the lights went up for the first interval. It was a jolt to fall back from the stage to the sparsely-filled theatre, the thin waver of applause. John Whiting, it seemed to me, had found the makings of a fine first act. The characterisation was sharp. The brooding atmosphere was established. What could have moved my colleagues to overlook this? Why had they not remembered this queer sense of dread, this feeling that a storm must break? No doubt the answer would come.*

*The Paul Southman of the play, a once-famous poet and pamphleteer, was eighty-three. He had been a vigorous, provocative writer. His fellow-writers had attacked him. He had gone into voluntary exile on a summer morning twenty-five years before when the elms at the front of the house were in full leaf. Now the trees must be felled; and Southman himself must fall: this veteran, this Shotover of a man, with flashes of his old fire and rhetoric, but also with dangerous intimations of senility. He must keep going for a little while yet. In London the enmities that exiled Paul are over. He is being canonised as a Grand Old Man. An eminent young critic is coming to him as a deputation—to take him to be feasted by those who had cast him out. "It's to-day I have to play the great man," says Paul. And he is frightened; he weeps a child's tears. He does not know whether he can pass the test, prove himself. Here, in this first act, was the blocking-in of a rich character-study. As acted by Michael Hordern, the struggling ancient held our interest, our compassion.*

*Other things fixed our interest: the hints that the house*

*was in a state of war with the village ; the firmly-imagined figures of the old man's grand-daughter and a wry man-servant ; the heavy sense of some impending disaster, as though lightning must strike at any hour from a dark anvil of thundercloud. The critic comes from London. He is correct and admiring. He bears a gift—appreciations of the work of Paul Frederick Southman by his fellow-writers. The old man, tetchily nervous, must be soothed. Eagerly, we wait to know what will happen, whether he will endure the night's ordeal or age will defeat him.*

*So far, excellent. There was a theme ; there was tension. Our interest moved in full tide. Then, of a sudden, failure : the dramatist went aground. Or we might say that he started to talk to himself : he had lost the power of communicating. On that strange afternoon in the Arts Theatre a potentially important play died in murk. At the end Paul was off-stage, hanged on one of his own elms. Three other people had met violent deaths. But why ? Why ? The dramatist had turned his back on his hearers, entered a private world.*

*Even so, the atmosphere still lingered. I was haunted by the play, by its brooding sullens, by the menacing figures of the deserters from an Army camp, by old Paul himself in his rambling and in one fit of bewildered grief like a shadow-Lear. Why had John Whiting allowed the piece to tail into into the dark ? Why, apparently, had he ceased to swear by the oaths of judgment and reason ? The obscurity infuriated. It was as if the dramatist had promised some rare treasure, and then laughed in our faces from a cloud, a thunder-cloud.*

*On that late afternoon at the Arts Theatre the curtain fell slowly. It was the end of the play. Paul Southman was dead. The village was ablaze. The young critic had turned to a kind of mad angel of death. How ? What ? Why ? Again and again the questions thudded in the mind as the curtain rose—once—and fell again, and a leaf-scratching mutter of applause ceased, and the audience moved towards the door. I came out into the clanging street, angry and baffled, yet haunted, oppressed, unable to throw off the weight*

*of that dark house, that tortured world of query and symbol. And I wondered whether it could be right to dismiss simply as turgid nonsense a play that had so powerful an effect upon the mind : one that clung and would not release its hold. At this point, maybe, the author would have echoed in despair : " ' Will you walk a little faster ? ' said the Whiting to the Snail."*

*The question remained unresolved. There it was : the First Prizewinner, the enigma of* SAINT'S DAY : *crowned by three distinguished men of the theatre, applauded by others in a letter to* The Times, *damned by the critics ; a play at once laurelled and rejected. In my heart I could not reject it. When I recall some of the successful plays of our time—one in particular—I am glad to have known* SAINT'S DAY, *to set it above those polite, tepid timidities. It still flares smokily in the recollection. It makes me believe that John Whiting may be one day a dramatist of the first rank. He has far to go, but, himself a Grand Old Man, he may yet strip his sleeve and show his scars and say, " Those were the wounds of* SAINT'S DAY *—long ago." Do not, I beg of you, forget his name.*

## II

*On a cold, clear January night at Whitby in* 1949, *some of us met an exciting version of Molière's* L'Avare *by the actor and dramatist, Miles Malleson. It excited because Malleson, working in the spirit rather than the letter, had rescued Molière from the starch of so many English versions and offered a text that was supple, speakable, and divorced wholly from translator's jargon. A year later to a night, this play,* The Miser—*it has been published in the first volume of* Plays of the Year—*turned up in London with the Old Vic cast. Since then the names of Molière and Malleson have chimed together in our theatre : he has delightedly rescued the plays from such lingo as " I'm*

*resolved to put a stop to your profusions." We have had in London* Tartuffe*—*which was broadcast in the summer of* 1951*—and now* THE PRODIGIOUS SNOB, *a version of* Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme, *has again the Malleson mark. That is, it comes to the stage swiftly and freely adapted, not in mummy-wrappings but alive and kicking. We do not imagine that Molière would wish us to scrutinise commas when the spirit of his play has been so accurately caught and kept.*

*Miles Malleson is himself one of the most likeable actors in the theatre.* THE PRODIGIOUS SNOB, *as he prefers to call the piece—an eighteenth-century version chose* The Cit Turned Gentleman—*has the same endearing qualities, a richness and glow. The play is Molière's, but Malleson has given to it something of himself. I remember him now as he acted Monsieur Jourdain for the Bristol Old Vic company in October* 1951, *looking in the part like a happy codfish with blood-pressure : one determined moreover, to use only the best parts of the ocean. He projected a fellow of panting, pop-eyed splendour, resolved—come what may—to excel in music, fencing, philosophy ("I have an indescribable urge to be wise"), and all the arts that make a gentleman.*

*This aspiring Jourdain, new-rich shopkeeper from the middle class, is one of the great figures of comedy. He is the centre of a play (in prose) that was acted first at Chambord in October* 1670, *and at Paris in the following month. Jean-Baptiste Poquelin de Molière was then forty-eight, and in the last few years of his remarkable life.* (He *died in February* 1673, *after playing in* Le Malade Imaginaire). *Although the first performance of* Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme *did not go well, Louis the Fourteenth, Molière's patron, liked the play, and Paris soon gave its assent.*

*Among its most famous passages is that in which Jourdain discovers from the philosophy master—during the composition of a letter to a Marchioness—that he has been talking prose all his life without knowing it. Here is the*

* *Published in the third volume of* Plays of the Year.

speech as it is rendered in an eighteenth-century translation of repute :

> On my conscience, I have spoken prose above these forty years, without knowing anything of the matter ; and I have all the obligations in the world to you, for informing me of this. I would therefore put in a letter to her : Beautiful marchioness, your fair eyes make me die with love ; but I would have this phrased in a gallant manner ; and have a gentle turn.

In Malleson's text this becomes :

> Well, well, well, to think I've been talking prose all my life and never knew it ! Really, I am very much obliged to you—I do feel I've learned something this morning. Now about the letter : I want to say to the lady—" Loveliest lady, your lovely eyes make me die of love." Only I want it expressed very elegantly.

Throughout, the dramatist, listening (as Molière himself did) with an actor's ear, has kept away from locutions that have too often, and absurdly, turned a Molière night to a penance. We do not find in a Malleson version such a phrase as this :

> And would it cost you anything to accommodate yourself to his chimeras ?

or such a mouthful as this :

> Would you but have given me the hearing, should I not have told you that the adventure you make such complaints about, was occasioned this morning by the presence of an old aunt, who will absolutely have it, that the mere approach of a man is a dishonour to a girl ; who is perpetually lecturing us upon this head, and represents to us all mankind as so many devils, whom one ought to avoid.

Readers of THE PRODIGIOUS SNOB will discover how Malleson has wisely and freely adapted these phrases. They appear in a standard translation which was once, and oddly, considered to hold "more of the spirit of the original" than would be found in a more modern version.

The important thing is that we have now a rendering of Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme that preserves the full gaiety of the original. Molière's detailed portrait of Jourdain is unexampled in its kind. First, we meet the resolute fellow at his morning levée and at his studies. Thenceforward, through the comedy and its intrigues, he remains charmingly single-minded, buffle-headed. We are happy for his sake that, after the final fantasies of the mock-Turkish ceremonial, Jourdain is still wholly cheerful and himself—surely the most amiable of upstarts that ever spent his life speaking prose.

## III

All players must feel tempted now and then to write a play for themselves. (It is notable that three of the five in this volume are by player-dramatists.) Sometimes the temptation is unfortunate, and the writer sees life through a film of grease-paint on one of those carefully-clouded stage mirrors. Yvonne Mitchell does not let THE SAME SKY suffer in this way. She is an actress of uncommon quality, with a warm, rose-heart voice. I have heard and seen her in many parts, from a poignant Ophelia—she never turned the mad scene into a tedious solemn-professional writhing in coils—to the daughter in Pirandello's Six Characters. As a dramatist, I met her first at the Nottingham Repertory Theatre during the spring of 1951. Rain had been falling that day. As we climbed up the Castle mound and looked over the wall across the Trent valley, the sky cleared and the sun's last embers shone for a few moments across a wet, smoke-drifted city. For a brief space there was a quick, oddly exciting interplay of light and shadow. I thought of it

*that evening in the local Playhouse, where Yvonne Mitchell's* Here Choose I *had its first performance on any stage : the quotation-title came from Bassanio's speech in* The Merchant of Venice *when he takes the key of the leaden casket : " Here choose I. Joy be the consequence."*

*The play proved to be a touching portrait of an East End Jewish family, rigidly orthodox, during the " blitz " winter of 1940–41. It was not merely a theatrical outburst, a raid on the emotions that would be forgotten at curtain-fall, a nine-thirty " All Clear." Its appeal for religious and racial tolerance was without cheap effects, the flash of tinsel. The elder daughter of the family married outside her religion. Her soldier-husband was killed on active service. At the last we saw the girl's parents, racially proud, moved to tolerance. The piece, like the dying afternoon over the vale of Trent, had a quick movement of light and shadow. It was simple, true, direct. André van Gyseghem produced it with ingenuity at the Playhouse on a stage the size of a hearthrug, and the Nottingham cast—especially a young actress called Ursula O'Leary—presented it with power.*

*The Arts Council awarded to Nottingham a £100 prize for one of the two best new plays produced by repertory companies during the year that ended on March 31, 1951. Nearly twelve months later, under the title of* THE SAME SKY, *the tale of the Brodskys reached the Lyric Theatre, Hammersmith, again ably acted and produced ; and its arrival in the West End (the Duke of York's Theatre) was no less than just. Joy be the consequence.*

## *IV*

*John Dighton made his name as a dramatist with the now celebrated farce,* The Happiest Days of Your Life.* *His second West End play,* WHO GOES THERE !, *was a light comedy about a young woman who had been a chambermaid in Dublin. Her name was Christina Deed*

* *Published in the first volume of* Plays of the Year, 1948-49

(" *Miss Deed,*" *said the dramatist, shaking with laughter*), *and she loved a Guardsman : a young man called Arthur, with a strong sense of duty, a very fine stamp-and-salute, and an objection to meeting his friends while on guard at St. James's Palace. Arthur's sense of duty crumpled a little when he came to consider his engagement with Christina. He had fallen in love, at a distance, with Another Person, and he wrote hastily to Dublin to break his promise. Miss Deed, who thought this hardly good enough, appeared at once from Eire and fainted by Arthur's sentry-box. Which is why* (*if you follow me*) *Christina found herself dumped in the Lobby Room of a " Grace and Favour " house at St. James's Palace, and why, too, for a few hours it seemed unlikely that a diplomatist would leave for his new job at Baffin Bay.*

*This is not, I hasten to agree, a perfectly accurate reflection of life near St. James's Palace. But the people are charming. While Miles Cornwall contemplates the Arctic Circle ; while his sister is finding her life strung into double-knots ; while their father is popping about to funerals ; while Arthur Crisp is snapping to attention ; and Miss Deed is playing Peg-o'-my-heart and puss-in-the-corner, no one will call anxiously for the harsher realism. Several lines* (" *Washington, the very heart of our great Empire* ") *are extremely funny. The dramatist has put everything into the bag, and the play, with the russet Tudor brick of St. James's Palace for a background, and scarlet and bearskins for adornment, becomes a kind of fantastic lucky dip. I wrote of the performance after the premiere : " There is no call yet to say more of Geraldine McEwan (' the new girl,' as the gallery saluted her, friendly-fashion, on the first night), than that here she is clearly the right actress in the right part. She presents a snuggling, purring colleen, bred on the banks of the Blarney River. Nigel Patrick, destined after all for the edge of the Arctic Circle, and Frances Rowe (as his sister) feather easily through the piece ; Victor Adams is plausibly a flustered ramrod ; H. G. Stoker looks in at beginning and end with accustomed benevolence ; and*

*Anthony Sharp is the sort of officer doomed, when he talks of 'the Brigade,' to get the flippant reply: 'Fire, Church Lads, or Ambulance?'"*

## V

*What was the truth of the Gunpowder Plot? At once most of us will recite the Guy Fawkes story. Hugh Ross Williamson has other ideas. Besides being a historian of independence, one prepared excitingly to back his judgments, he is also among the wisest of our historical dramatists. His plays are firm-set because he has conquered his subjects and knows his people: he does not deal out a few slap-happy* clichés, *hand round cloaks and swords, and let the massacre proceed. I remember still his* Queen Elizabeth *which summoned a living woman, not merely a Tudor in a tantrum. I wrote at the time: "Forget you have ever been bored with mock-Elizabeths and bran-pie drama, bogus psychologists and mumble-history, and find here the great Queen as, plausibly, she was before winter had stolen on the splendour of her Tudor rose."*

*Now, in* GUNPOWDER, TREASON AND PLOT, *we have an entirely new gloss on the affair of* 1605. *Hugh Ross Williamson has an* agent-provocateur *theory that he has developed at length in his exciting study,* The Gunpowder Plot (*Faber*). *In his play the theme has dramatic fire; the powder never fizzles. This should certainly appear on a London stage. Its people, the obstinate, gallant Catesby, the treacherous Monteagle, the icy Cecil, come up as though the author had lived with them and grown to understand them over a long period. The last scene in Cecil's house, while the conspirators are being dragged to execution through the Strand, is haunting in strength and spareness.*

*I collected the play at the Ipswich Arts Theatre during one of those journeys to the provinces that no metropolitan drama critic should fail to make; and I remember now*

*especially the acting of* Richard Leech, *a dark, urgent* Catesby ; *John Justin as* Monteagle, *and* Barry Phelps *as the satin-lined* Cecil : *acting that was creative and not merely a matter of period flick-and-trick.* The Arts Council *awarded to the production one of the four* Festival of Britain *prizes of* £300 *in the competition for new plays entered by British repertory theatres.*

*J. C.* TREWIN

*Hampstead,*
*April,* 1952

*I am grateful to the Editors and Proprietors of* The Observer, John o' London's Weekly, *and* The Radio Times *for permission to quote from my articles in those journals.*

# SAINT'S DAY

*by*

*JOHN WHITING*

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*Applications for the performance of this play, whether by amateurs or professionals, should be addressed to the author's agent: A. D. Peters, 10 Buckingham Street, Adelphi, London W.C. 2. No performance may take place unless a licence has been obtained.*

The London Arts Theatre Committee Limited presented *Saint's Day* at the Arts Theatre Club, London, on September 5, 1951, with the following cast :

| | |
|---|---|
| PAUL SOUTHMAN | *Michael Hordern* |
| STELLA HEBERDEN | *Valerie White* |
| CHARLES HEBERDEN | *Robert Urquhart* |
| JOHN WINTER | *Scott Harrold* |
| ROBERT PROCATHREN | *John Byron* |
| THE REVEREND GILES ALDUS | *Donald Pleasence* |
| CHRISTIAN MELROSE | *Ralph Michael* |
| WALTER KILLEEN | *Robert Mooney* |
| HENRY CHATER | *William Morum* |
| THE CHILD | *Peggy Palmer* |
| JUDITH WARDEN | *Anne Padwick* |
| OTHER WOMEN OF THE VILLAGE | *Judith Nelmes*<br>*Maureen Moore*<br>*Sabina Ward* |
| THOMAS COWPER | *Bertram Shuttleworth* |

The play produced by Stephen Murray

The setting designed by Fanny Taylor

# CHARACTERS

STELLA HEBERDEN, *Paul's grand-daughter*
CHARLES HEBERDEN, *her husband*
PAUL SOUTHMAN, *an aged poet*
JOHN WINTER, *his manservant*
ROBERT PROCATHREN, *an admirer of Paul*
GILES ALDUS, *a recluse*

CHRISTIAN MELROSE
WALTER KILLEEN
HENRY CHATER
} *three soldiers*

HANNAH TREWIN
MARGARET BANT
EDITH TINSON
FLORA BALDON
JUDITH WARDEN
A CHILD
THOMAS COWPER
} *people of the village*

# SCENE

*The play is in three acts, and the scene is laid in a room of Paul Southman's house in England on the twenty-fifth day of January.*

| | |
|---|---|
| ACT ONE | *Morning* |
| ACT TWO | *Early Afternoon* |
| ACT THREE | *Night* |

# ACT ONE

*The day is the twenty-fifth of January : it is morning.*

*The scene is a room in Paul Southman's house.*

*Charles and Stella Heberden are present, motionless. The woman is standing by one of the three large central windows. The source of light behind the drawn curtains of the room is an oil-lamp carried by the man.*

STELLA : Listen !

[*They stand listening to the chimes of a distant church. The chimes end.*]

CHARLES : Half-past.
STELLA : Nine ?
CHARLES : Must be.
STELLA : Might be eight.
CHARLES : No.
STELLA : Surely not ten.
CHARLES : No, nine. Half-past nine. Is it raining now ?

[*Stella has moved to set the clock.*]

STELLA : It might be any time, really. No, it's not raining now.
CHARLES : It was earlier this morning.

[*He yawns.*]

STELLA : The key's not on the ledge.
CHARLES : Look behind the clock. There ?
STELLA : Yes. There wasn't——
CHARLES : It slips down. Can you get it ?
STELLA : Yes. There wasn't any trouble in the night, was there ?
CHARLES : No.

[*Stella begins to wind and set the clock.*]

How long have you been up ?

STELLA : Twenty minutes or so.

CHARLES : I didn't hear you.

STELLA : You were asleep. I shan't wind the strike.

CHARLES : No, don't. It's wrong, anyway. [*He calls.*] John Winter ! John Winter ! (*To Stella.*) Where is he ?

STELLA : I don't know. I haven't seen him this morning.

CHARLES : John Winter !

[*Charles, wearing a woollen dressing-gown over his shirt—he is without trousers—stands on one leg, chafing a bare foot between his hands. He is below a narrow stairway, set within a wall, leading to an upper floor.*]

I'm cold.

STELLA : Go and dress.

CHARLES : John Winter !

STELLA : If he could hear you he would've come by now.

CHARLES : He's up, I suppose.

STELLA : Now, Charles—don't shout again.

CHARLES : What ?

STELLA : We don't want Paul to wake early. He's going to have a tiring day.

CHARLES : He's already awake. I heard him moving——

[*He has opened the only door of the room and calls down the stairs to the kitchen, " John Winter ! "*]

I heard him moving in his room as I came down.

[*From his room above the narrow stairway Paul Southman calls, " John Winter ! "*]

There he is.

STELLA : Damn ! I wanted him to sleep as late as possible this morning. Go up and——
CHARLES : Get John Winter to make a fire when he comes in.
STELLA : All right. Go up and try to persuade Paul to go back to bed for an hour.
CHARLES : He won't.
STELLA : Try to persuade him. I'm worried——

[*Paul Southman calls again : " John Winter."*]

All right, Grandpa ! (*To Charles.*) I'm worried as to whether the journey will tire him. I hope to God they don't give him anything to drink when he gets there. I'm sending John Winter with him—don't you think that's a good idea ?
CHARLES : Yes.

[*He is at the window drawing aside the curtain.*]

It's going to be a fine day.
STELLA : Go up to him, will you, Charles. I don't want him to shout again or he'll start coughing.
CHARLES : All right.

[*He takes up a man's bicycle which is lying in the centre of the room and props it against the wall.*]

How are you this morning ?
STELLA : All right, now.
CHARLES : Sickness gone off ?
STELLA : Yes. Yes, it goes when I've had a cup of tea and a biscuit.
CHARLES : Have you made some tea already ?
STELLA : Yes.
CHARLES : Where is it ?
STELLA : In our room.

[*Charles goes towards the stairs.*]

Didn't you see it?
CHARLES: No.
STELLA: Leave the lamp.
CHARLES: Sorry.

[*As he goes up the stairs Paul Southman calls again:* "*John Winter!*"]

I'm coming.
PAUL: I want John Winter, not you. I want dressing.

[*Charles goes up the stairs. Stella clears some dirty plates and cups from a central table and puts them on an ornate but filthy silver tray. She picks up a bicycle pump from the floor and fixes it into place on the bicycle. Going to the windows she draws back the curtains.*
*The room is large: the building of the year* 1775. *There are three windows opening on to an iron balcony—entrance to the room can be gained by any of these windows. The balcony has circular iron steps leading down to the garden. There are two other entrances to the room: one, a door opening on to a small landing above stairs which lead to the kitchens and also to the main door of the house—two, a narrow stairway leading to the upper floors. This gives the room an elevation of being above the ground floor and yet below the main first floor. It stands alone, an architectural freak, having no ceiling but a roof directly above it.*
*There is an empty fireplace. The furnishing of the room is minimum for habitation: a table and about it four chairs—two chairs and a low bench before the fireplace. The furnishings, together with the various utilitarian objects about the room—the silver tray, the cups and dishes on the table—are of excellent quality but have lost their grace by neglect and misuse. Several hundred books are piled on the floor in a corner of the room.*

*From the right window the wall of the room is curved and on the plaster surface of the wall is an unfinished painting. This painting represents five human figures and a dog—greater than life-size—grouped about an, as yet, unspecified sixth person. Executed in oils, it is harsh in texture, garish in colour. Below the picture stands a small scaffolding with painter's materials : there is also a ladder. The floor of this part of the room before the painting is raised six inches by means of a half-circular rostrum.*
*The curtains withdrawn Stella puts out the lamp. It is light and promises to be a fine clear day.*
*The front door is heard to open and close ; footsteps sound on the uncarpeted stairs from below. John Winter enters.*]

STELLA : Good morning, John Winter.
WINTER : Good morning, Miss Stella.
STELLA : You've been out already.
WINTER : Yes.
STELLA : Where ?
WINTER : To get stuff for the fire.
STELLA : Surely you keep that in the cellar.
WINTER : You may remember——
STELLA : What ? Speak up.
WINTER : I say you may remember I moved it some days ago. I moved it from the cellar to my shed because of the damp—it's mostly wood.
STELLA : I didn't know you'd moved it.
WINTER : Mr Charles will remember. He helped me.
STELLA : Anyway, you've got the stuff for the fire.
WINTER : I've left it at the door. I didn't want to bring it in until the room——
STELLA : Very well.
WINTER : ——until the room had been tidied. I've already cleaned the grate.
STELLA : You look frozen.
WINTER : It's very cold out of doors.

STELLA : Well, don't stand there! Grandpa—Mr Southman has been shouting for you. My husband has gone up to him.
WINTER : Should I light the fire first or go up and dress Mr Southman?
STELLA : I don't know. I——

[*They stand silent for a moment.*]

Oh, go and dress him but try to keep him in his room for a while. I want him to rest this morning. Just a minute! I want to talk to you. This man who is coming to visit us to-day——
WINTER : Mr Procathren.
STELLA : You know about him?
WINTER : Mr Southman mentioned him to me yesterday.
STELLA : You know to-day is Mr Southman's birthday?
WINTER : Yes.
STELLA : In fact, you know all about it.
WINTER : That is all I know—that this gentleman is arriving on Mr Southman's birthday. I think I should go up now.

[*He looks towards the stairs.*]

STELLA : Wait a minute! You may as well know it all. This Mr Procathren—Robert Procathren—is a famous poet and critic. He is coming here to do honour to my grandfather on his birthday—honour as a poet. Late this afternoon Mr Procathren, Mr Southman and you will drive to London by car. You will go with them, do you understand? You will go with them to London.
WINTER : Yes.
STELLA : Those are the arrangements.
WINTER : Very well.

STELLA: There is to be a dinner in London to-night —— Are you listening to me?

WINTER: Yes.

STELLA: You are not! Please pay attention. There is to be a dinner to-night in London in honour of Mr Southman. It will be attended by very famous men and women. You will go with Mr Southman. You won't go into the dinner, of course, but wait outside. You will stay the night in London and be driven back to-morrow. Have you any better clothes than those?

WINTER: I have a blue suit.

STELLA: Wear it. One more thing—I shall cook the meal to-day. What food have we got?

[*Winter is silent.*]

Have you any food at all in the house?

WINTER: There's some bacon and vegetables.

STELLA: We shall want some meat and something for—is there any fruit?—is there anything? And coffee—is there any coffee?

WINTER: No.

STELLA: Then you had better go down to the village this morning—early—and get these things. Do you understand?

WINTER: Yes.

STELLA: Go as soon as Mr Southman has finished with you.

WINTER: I shall need money.

STELLA: Here you are.

[*She takes a ten-shilling note from her pocket and gives it to John Winter.*]

That's all right, then?

[*John Winter does not reply.*]

Don't be so sullen, John Winter! You may be the servant but you know the position as to money as well as I do. We cannot pay those bills in the village at present—but we will in time. Promise them that. You can tell them—promise them—you—because they respect you down in the village—yes, they respect you.

WINTER: They hate me.

STELLA: Nonsense.

WINTER: Truth.

STELLA: Hate you?

WINTER: Of course—why not?—despise me—hate me, they do. I say, why not? A beggar—I have to go to them—a little food—say, a little meat—a little bread—later—a little more bread—a little more meat —Please!

STELLA: John Winter!

WINTER: One day they'll stop—or I'll stop—and then what will happen?

STELLA: Are you threatening me?

[*He is silent.*]

I say, are you threatening me?

[*He shakes his head.*]

Come now, you wouldn't like to see Mr Southman or his guest go without food, would you? Would you? No, of course, you wouldn't, because you love him as I love him and we'll fight for him, won't we? We'll put our pride in our pocket and we'll fight for him. We've got to look after him, you know. There's no one else. You and myself, that's all. Now, go along.

[*Charles comes down the stairs: he is dressed and carries a cup of tea.*]

John Winter.

[*Stella goes to John Winter and puts her arms about him.*]

John Winter, I want you to go with my grandfather to-day—go with him to London—because I trust you. Remember, he will be among strangers—all his friends have gone—and he may be frightened. And if he is afraid he will appear ridiculous. I want you to see that he is not frightened—that by his age he is great and not ridiculous. That he is Paul Southman.

WINTER : He is a great and famous man.

STELLA : Of course he is. And to-day we have an opportunity to remind the world of that. Now, go up and get him dressed but try to keep him in his room.

WINTER : I've put out his best clothes.

STELLA : He's waiting for you.

CHARLES : He's sitting on his bed cleaning a pistol. You'd better be careful, John Winter.

[*John Winter laughs and goes up the stairs.*]

STELLA : I told you I'm sending John Winter up to London with Paul, didn't I ?

CHARLES : Yes. Are you going to light a fire ?

STELLA : Later.

CHARLES : I'm so cold.

[*Stella fetches an oil-stove from a corner of the room. She lights it.*]

STELLA : Sit over this.

CHARLES : Look !

[*He points to the ornate pediment over the door.*]

STELLA : What ?

CHARLES : There's a bird—above the door. It's hiding there—behind the scroll.

STELLA : They fly in sometimes. They don't come to any harm.

CHARLES : What was all that just now ?
STELLA : When ?
CHARLES : With John Winter.
STELLA : Oh, a minor revolt—over getting food from the village. He says they hate him down there. I suppose it's true. They hate us all. Is that stove alight ?
CHARLES : Yes.
STELLA : They hate us because they don't understand our isolation. They don't understand us and so they fear us. They fear us and so they hate us.
CHARLES : But only passively. They——
STELLA : Not at all. Do you know that three years ago—before you came here—there was a plan among the villagers to attack this house. Everything was arranged but on the decided night they sat drinking to get up their courage and when the time came they were all too drunk to walk the half-mile to the house. So the attack didn't come off that time. It may someday.
CHARLES : What would they do ?
STELLA : Paul says they'd kill us.
CHARLES : It must be hard for John Winter. He has to go down among them—we don't.
STELLA : Well, I've given him some money this morning so he'll be all right.
CHARLES : By the way, I've got this.

[*He takes some coins from his pocket.*]

You'd better have it.
STELLA : Thank you.
CHARLES : Do you think John Winter could do something for me in London ?
STELLA : What ?
CHARLES : If he has time.
STELLA : Well, what ?

CHARLES : I've got a small canvas I think I can sell—might get ten pounds for it—if John Winter could take it round to the dealers for me to-morrow.
STELLA : Charles ! Will you ? Will you really try to sell it ? Ten pounds would help so much.
CHARLES : It's that small oil I did of you three months ago. You don't want it ?
STELLA : If you sell it we shall be able to——
CHARLES : You don't want it ?
STELLA : No, I don't want it. We shall be able to——
CHARLES : Very well ! (*A pause.*) Then that's settled.
STELLA : Yes. I'll tell John Winter. (*Stella moves to Charles.*) I'm sorry, Charles, but we must have money.

[*Charles moves away from her.*]

CHARLES : I know.
STELLA : If only Grandpa would begin to write again. Anything ! I'm sure they'd take it. Take it on his name alone. People haven't forgotten him.
CHARLES : Of course they have.
STELLA : They haven't ! If they've forgotten him why should this man Procathren be coming down to-day to take him to London ?
CHARLES : The whole thing is probably a stunt. Listen, Stella. Who is going to be at that dinner to-night ? I'll tell you. Fashionable people. Poets, painters, novelists and critics à la mode. The kind of people who, twenty-five years ago when Paul wrote his pamphlet " The Abolition of Printing ", turned against him and drove him into this exile and silence. Those are the people who will be receiving him, applauding him to-night.

[*There is a pause.*]

I don't think you understand, Stella. We've had all

this so often before. Why can't you leave the old man alone? For him to attempt to begin again—— No, I don't think you could understand.

STELLA: Of course I understand.

CHARLES: Let me put it this way. Go to London to-day and ask a hundred people who know of Paul —ask them about him—and ninety-nine of them will say that he died years ago. I tell you even those who haven't forgotten him think he's dead. His name in a newspaper to-morrow would cause nothing but surprise. Let the few eminent people who do remember him enjoy the entertainment to-night. It won't do them or Paul any harm but don't you build anything from it—useless and unkind.

STELLA: Charles, this is a chance we've never had before. He'll be remembered by this dinner. Now is the time for him to start writing again. We needn't bother about the physical effect on him—I can do the writing if he'll dictate. Anything! Articles, satires—any of the things that made him famous—made him Paul Southman, the pamphleteer and lampoonist, the poet and revolutionary.

CHARLES: He's eighty-three.

STELLA: I know.

CHARLES: All those things—useless—he's an old man—quite out of touch—he has no idea what has happened in the outside world in the last twenty-five years. There have been changes, you know.

STELLA: Then we'll start taking the newspapers again. I'll try to get him out even if it's only to the village. We'll buy some new books and I'll read to him.

CHARLES: You know he can't concentrate for two minutes either reading or being read to. You know he will never go to the village. You know—you must know he's a very old man and he's finished. Finished!

I'm trying to explain in such a way that you can understand.

[*Pause.*]

It won't work, Stella.

[*Pause.*]

Let him die in peace.

[*Pause.*]

Let him alone.

[*Charles goes to the door.*]

STELLA : Charles, I want to speak to you. Charles !

[*He stops at the door.*]

I've lied to you.
CHARLES : What ?
STELLA : I've lied to you.
CHARLES : What about this time ? (*She does not answer.*) Come along, you know you enjoy the confession more than the lie. I suppose you're not going to have a child.
STELLA : No, it's not that. I've lied to you about my age.
CHARLES : Well ?
STELLA : I told you I was twenty-eight last birthday. I was really thirty-two.
CHARLES : That makes you twelve years older than me instead of eight. All right.
STELLA : I don't——
CHARLES : Did you think four years would make so much difference ?
STELLA : You look so young.
CHARLES : And who is there to see me but you ?

STELLA : This morning there will be Robert Procathren. I was going to suggest that we pretend to him that you're my brother—not my husband.

CHARLES : Don't be absurd !

STELLA : Is it absurd ? Well, never mind. Go and get yourself some breakfast.

CHARLES : Yes, I will. And Stella——

STELLA : Yes ?

CHARLES : Don't try to get the old man back to work.

STELLA : All right. But I think it would be a good thing—not only for us but for him.

CHARLES (*in sudden anger*) : It would not ! It would not be a good thing. It would not be a good thing for any of us. What is it you're hankering after ? You want something from it. You're planning something, aren't you—aren't you ?

STELLA : Don't speak to me like that !

[*In silence Stella picks up the tray and goes out of the room and down the stairs to the kitchens below. Charles shouts after her.*]

CHARLES : It's only that you don't understand.

[*He is unanswered. He goes to the stove and warms his hands : he ties his shoe-laces : he goes to the scaffolding set below the mural painting : he examines the painter's materials set on the scaffolding. Stella returns to the room. She begins to wipe the table with a damp cloth. Charles speaks.*]

I've got a pain in my side.

[*A pause.*]

Had it last night. Worse this morning.

[*Stella does not reply.*]

Here.

[*He indicates the position of the pain. Stella ignores this and Charles turns back to the painter's materials.*]

Do you think John Winter could get me some stuff in London?

STELLA: I should think so.

CHARLES: Now, what do I want? I want some——

STELLA: Write it down.

CHARLES: What time is this fellow arriving?

STELLA: No special time. Just this morning.

CHARLES: Procathren—Procathren.

STELLA: What do you say?

CHARLES: Nothing. Have you got Paul anything for his birthday?

STELLA: Yes. A pair of slippers.

CHARLES: Where are they?

STELLA: In the table drawer. Why?

CHARLES: When are you going to give them to him?

STELLA: When he comes down, I suppose.

[*Charles has taken a small parcel from the canvas bag hanging on the scaffolding.*]

CHARLES: Will you give him this at the same time?

STELLA: Why don't you give it to him yourself?

CHARLES: No, you. Here you are. It's a scarf—woollen scarf. Take it.

[*Stella takes the parcel and puts it in the table drawer.*]

STELLA: Where's the pain?

CHARLES: What?

STELLA: The pain you said you had—where is it?

CHARLES: Here.

[*Stella puts her hand to his side.*]

STELLA: Bad?

CHARLES: Rather. I may have strained myself. I

fell from there—(*he indicates the scaffolding*)—yesterday I called out for you as I fell—you didn't hear me. Just a minute. You've got a cobweb in your hair. Stand still.

[*His hands go to her head.*]

No. No, it's your hair. White. Your hair is——

PAUL : They must go. I have decided——

[*Paul Southman can be heard speaking to John Winter as they come down the stairs.*]

——we could manage it between us——

CHARLES : Your hair is going white.

PAUL : You think I'm too old but I could give you a hand.

STELLA : Charles !

PAUL : Away with them. That's what I say—— Careful !—then we shall have a clear view——

STELLA : Charles !

PAUL : ——a clear view if anything threatens.

STELLA : I'm ugly to you, aren't I, Charles ?

PAUL (*he laughs*) : What do I mean by that, eh, John Winter ?

STELLA : Charles ! Speak to me. I'm ugly to you, aren't I ?

PAUL : As it threatens at all times we must be prepared.

[*Paul Southman and John Winter reach the foot of the stairs.*]

Good morning.

STELLA : Good morning, Grandpa.

CHARLES : Good morning, Paul.

PAUL : What's the time ?

STELLA : About a quarter to ten.

[*John Winter puts a chair beside the oil-stove. Paul sits.*]

PAUL : Thank you. I've just been telling John Winter about an idea of mine. A precaution. I'll tell you later. I'll have some breakfast now, John Winter.

[*John Winter goes out.*]

Is there no fire ?
STELLA : We'll have one lit in a few minutes.
PAUL : Good. It's very cold. I've been very cold in bed all night.

[*He looks up at Stella and Charles, smiling.*]

It is to-day I have to play the great man, isn't it ?
STELLA : Yes.
PAUL : You notice I'm dressed up ?
STELLA : You look very nice.
PAUL : You understand I realise the importance of to-day ?
STELLA : I hope you do.
PAUL : Is the weather going to be fine ?
STELLA : I think so.
PAUL : The sun shining ?
STELLA : I hope so.
PAUL : The flags hung out in London for me ?
STELLA (*laughing*) : Perhaps.
PAUL (*laughing*) : Excellent !
STELLA : Many happy returns of the day, Grandpa.

[*She gives him her present.*]

PAUL : God bless my soul !
STELLA : God bless you, indeed—pretending you didn't expect it.
PAUL : How neatly it's parcelled up—with such a tight little knot. What is it, I wonder ? I am supposed

to be able to open it, am I? I mean, there is something inside.
STELLA: Let me do it.
PAUL: No, no. I've done it now.

[*He has undone the parcel and holds up the pair of slippers.*]

For my feet?
STELLA: And this is from Charles.

[*Charles turns away.*]

PAUL: What is it, Charles?

[*John Winter enters carrying a cup of tea and a plate of rusks.*]

CHARLES: A scarf.
STELLA: You mustn't tell him.
CHARLES: Knitted by myself with wool from a pair of my old socks.
PAUL: Excellent! Now I shall be warm at both ends.

[*He pauses in undoing the parcel.*]

I hope it's not green. I don't like green things.

[*He takes out the scarf: it is green.*]

STELLA: Put it on, Grandpa. You look very handsome. Doesn't he, Charles?
PAUL: Do I?
STELLA: Of course you do, darling.

[*John Winter takes a box of cigarettes from his pocket. He holds it out to Paul.*]

PAUL: What's this?
WINTER: Birthday present, sir.

PAUL : Thank you, John Winter. I forgot your last birthday, didn't I ?
WINTER : Yes, sir.
PAUL : Good o. you to remember mine. Cigarettes. Have one ?
WINTER : Thank you.
STELLA : Now, Grandpa, you don't want to smoke. Have your breakfast first.
PAUL : Very well.

[*He begins to dip the rusks in the tea.*]

Stella, John Winter and I have been discussing—— Stella !
STELLA : Yes ?

[*She has been whispering with Charles who begins to go from the room.*]

PAUL : John Winter and I have been—— Where's Charles going ?
CHARLES : I'm going to get some breakfast. Can I pinch one of your cigarettes ?

[*After Charles has taken a cigarette Paul puts the box into his pocket. Charles goes out.*]

PAUL : John Winter. John Winter, where are you ?
WINTER : Here.
PAUL : I saw the dog from my window just before I came down. He was limping. What's the matter with him ? You haven't been beating him again, have you ?
WINTER : I never beat him.
PAUL : I've told you before—I won't have that dog beaten. Do you understand ?
WINTER : Yes.
PAUL : He may misbehave himself but he's getting

old and he doesn't know what he's doing. He's getting old and a little simple. I suppose you'll be beating me soon. Now, remember——

STELLA (*to John Winter*) : You'd better get down to the village. I want those things.

PAUL : Is John Winter going out ?

STELLA : Yes. He's going down to the village to get some food. We can't give Mr Procathren bacon.

PAUL : Why not ?

STELLA : Go along, John Winter. Meat, bread, dried fruit of some kind and coffee.

[*John Winter begins to wheel the bicycle from the room. Paul calls after him.*]

PAUL : O, brave John Winter ! Going down among the enemy again. Would you like to take my pistol ? Be careful not to break wind in the High Street or they'll be after you.

[*John Winter has left the room.*]

One day they will.

STELLA : What ?

PAUL : Kill him.

STELLA : No.

PAUL : Why not ?

STELLA : Like them he's a servant ; they would never kill one of their own kind. They hate him, perhaps, but——

PAUL : Are you suggesting that John Winter is working with the villagers against us ?

STELLA : No, of course not.

PAUL : Such a thing had never occurred to me. Is it likely ?

STELLA : No.

PAUL : Is it ?

STELLA : No ! Don't get such an idea into your head. I didn't mean to suggest it. John Winter is loyal. He loves you dearly.
PAUL : He beats the dog.
STELLA : He denies that.
PAUL : I won't have that dog beaten. I must exert my authority. John Winter is my servant and he shall obey my orders.
STELLA : Of course.

[*A pause.*]

What are you thinking ?
PAUL : He moves quite freely among the villagers, you know.
STELLA : To spy on them. So that we can be warned of any danger. Now, come, Grandpa. Don't be silly. Of course John Winter is loyal to us. Remember the night when they intended to attack the house and John Winter sat with you out there on the balcony waiting for them. He was prepared to fight with you against them—against his own kind. Remember that. (*Paul is silent.*) What was it you were telling him before you came down ?
PAUL : It is absurd of me to doubt him. Absurd ! It was cold that night, you know, but he didn't complain. No, he made jokes—very good jokes, too—about the villagers. He's brave and he's loyal. It is ridiculous to doubt his honesty.
STELLA : Of course it is ridiculous. What were you telling him as you came down ? I'm interested.
PAUL : What ? Oh, yes. Yes, Stella. You know the two trees—the elms—that stand in front of the house—— ?
STELLA : Tweedledum and Tweedledee—yes ?
PAUL : What's that ?

STELLA : We used to call them that when I was a child—don't you remember ?

[*She puts up her hands in a defensive boxing attitude.*]

Their arms outstretched in constant conflict—remember ?

PAUL : Yes, of course. They're dead now.

STELLA : Yes, they're dead now.

PAUL : And I'm going to cut them down.

STELLA : Why ?

PAUL : Because they are a danger.

STELLA : To whom ?

PAUL : To ourselves. I saw them yesterday as they are—blanched by age—withered, contorted and monstrous. They shouldn't stand before the house. They must be brought down.

STELLA : I played in them when I was a child—with Ellen.

PAUL : You agree they should come down ?

STELLA : If you think it's necessary.

PAUL : I believe it is necessary. And it must be done quickly.

STELLA : Very well.

PAUL : That way it will give us less pain. I remember them, too. They were in full leaf the summer morning I arrived here twenty-five years ago. On approach they quite obscured the house and when you were before the door they shadowed you. But now they're dead and must be brought down. I can do it with John Winter.

STELLA : You mustn't do it ! Not yourself.

PAUL : With John Winter. You don't think I'm strong enough ? I'm quite strong enough. It will have to be carefully done for they must fall away from the house.

[*He takes the cigarettes from his pocket.*]

I think Imight have a cigarette now.

STELLA : Yes.

PAUL : Nice of John Winter. Look ! He's written on the box. What does it say ?

STELLA (*she reads*) : " Many happy returns of the day. Your obedient servant, John Winter."

[*They laugh.*]

PAUL : Absurd of me to suspect him of treachery.

STELLA : Absurd.

PAUL : Have one ?

STELLA : Thank you, I will.

PAUL : I suppose John Winter stole them.

STELLA : I suppose so.

PAUL : Sit down.

STELLA : I have a lot to do.

PAUL : For a few minutes. Whilst we smoke our cigarettes.

[*Stella pulls up a stool and sits by his side.*]

Have you matches ?

STELLA : Yes.

PAUL : You remember the trees from your childhood —Tweedledum and Tweedledee ?

STELLA : Yes. Is that foolish ?

PAUL : I don't think so.

STELLA : Somehow I—— Tell me, are they evil now ?

PAUL : Not evil—dangerous.

STELLA : They were most benevolent to Ellen and me when we were children. They were almost our only plaything and gave themselves so willingly to masquerading as other places—other worlds.

PAUL : But they're ugly now—ugly and old and dead.

STELLA : Yes.

PAUL : So I shall cut them down.

STELLA : Very well. When did they die ?

[*Charles, below in the kitchen, shouts : " Get out ! Get out ! "*]

PAUL : What ? What's that ? What ?
STELLA : Charles.

[*She goes to the door and calls down the stairs.*]

Charles !
CHARLES (*from below*) : All right. It's the dog.
STELLA : It's the dog.
PAUL : Well, what's he doing to it ?
STELLA : I don't know.
PAUL : Why do you all hate that dog so much ?
STELLA : We don't.
PAUL : You never seem to give him a moment's peace.
STELLA : He's so large and he will come into the house—and he's begun to smell terribly.
PAUL : Probably I do. I'm getting old. I suppose I shan't be allowed in the house soon.
STELLA : Don't pity yourself.
PAUL : What did you say ?
STELLA : Nothing.
PAUL : Stella ! What did you say ?
STELLA : Charles is really very good to him.
PAUL : Then why does he shout at him ? And look —look ! What's he doing here ?

[*They turn to look at the painting.*]

What does it mean ? What are those monstrous figures ? And there's the dog—see ? At least, I suppose it's my dog. I don't understand such things.
STELLA : He'll say very little about it.
PAUL : Has it a title ?
STELLA : I don't know.

PAUL : Things should always be titled. Does he tell you nothing ?
STELLA : Very little.
PAUL : I don't understand him. I was nearly sixty when I gave up my work and came to live here—and there was a reason. I was victimised—driven here by my enemies. Charles's work as a painter was recognised when he was—how old ?
STELLA : Fifteen.
PAUL : And now he's twenty. There was no attack on him or on his work. He was acclaimed as a prodigy. Yet he came here, met you, married you—strange, you—and now lives with the old fellow—the poor man. Refuses to show his paintings—except that. What is to go there ?

[*He indicates the unfinished lower part of the mural.*]

STELLA : There ? Oh, another figure—a woman. Charles wants me to model for it but I haven't had time as yet.
PAUL : A woman. Then the other figures—those—will be looking down at her, eh ?
STELLA : I suppose so.
PAUL : I don't understand it.
STELLA : Don't——
PAUL : I don't understand it at all.
STELLA : Don't let it worry you. Leave him in peace.
PAUL : Charles ? I will. But he mustn't harm the dog. Is that clock right ?
STELLA : I think so. I put it right by the village.
PAUL : Procathren should——
STELLA : Oh, Grandpa ! (*She laughs.*) I've got something to show you. I found it last night.

[*She has taken a page of a magazine from the pocket of her dress and unfolded it*]

It's from a magazine called *The Tatler*—an old copy—some years ago—look——

PAUL: Who is it?

STELLA: Read it.

PAUL (*puts on his spectacles and reads*): "The Honourable Robert Procathren, distinguished young poet and critic, photographed last week after his marriage to Miss Amanda Mantess, daughter of Mr and Mrs Sebastian Mantess of——" It's torn away. What a beautiful young man!

STELLA: Isn't he?

PAUL: Fancy such an elegant and obviously witty person coming to see us.

STELLA: Why not?

PAUL: But, I mean, look at him. Look at his clothes. His hair is trimmed and I'm sure, if you could see them, his finger-nails would be spotless. His linen is as crisp as the paper on which he has been writing to me. Oh, dear! He's obviously very famous and very correct. What on earth shall I say to him? Look at those dainty feet in the pointed shoes.

[*He stamps in his great black boots.*]

STELLA: Are you making fun of him?

PAUL: Indeed, no. He frightens me.

STELLA: What do you mean?

PAUL: Come, child, you know what is meant by fear. I'm afraid of him——

STELLA: Paul!

PAUL: ——his whole appearance is alien to me.

STELLA: His appearance. But, my dear, appearance has never counted with you. Do you mean his clothes? It doesn't matter what he wears but what he is as a man.

PAUL: About to-night, Stella——

STELLA: He is your admirer—he is coming here to

express that admiration. And you can meet him—I give you my word—not as an equal but as his superior. You see—he'll admit that.

PAUL : How you do talk. But, darling, I'm frightened about to-night.

STELLA : You mustn't be.

PAUL : Why don't you try to understand ?

STELLA : You mustn't be frightened.

PAUL : I——

STELLA : Look at me. Do you love me ?

PAUL : I do.

STELLA : Then if you love me you won't be frightened.

PAUL : So simple ? I'm old. Easily frightened.

STELLA : Paul—Paul !

[*She grasps his arm.*]

PAUL : You're hurting me !

STELLA : You are greater than any of them. They understand that by these last twenty-five years of exile and mortification you have proved the justice and truth of those opinions expressed in your pamphlets. You have proved your integrity and saintliness and to-night it is that they will honour. Paul ! you're not going before a tribunal.

PAUL : Ha ! They will be in judgement on my table manners.

STELLA : It is your poetry they will be remembering.

PAUL : They'll laugh at my fumbling with the knives and forks.

STELLA : They will remember your political writings.

PAUL : A stupid old man ! I shan't be able to eat the food they give me. A glass of wine goes to my head and makes me babble like a baby. I shall want to go to the lavatory during their speeches and I shan't be

able to go. I shall wet myself again and then you'll be angry with me. O Stella !

[*There is a pause—then Stella speaks with gentleness.*]

STELLA : There is nothing to fear. I promise you that. I've never promised you anything that has not been perfectly fulfilled, have I ? Have I ?

PAUL : No.

STELLA : Then you can trust in this promise. You will not be afraid to-day.

[*She gives him her handkerchief.*]

Dry your tears.

PAUL : I feel giddy.

STELLA : It's the cigarette. Do you remember what you said when you came downstairs this morning ?

PAUL : Within twelve hours——

STELLA : Do you remember what you said ? " It is to-day I have to play the great man, isn't it ? " That's what you said.

PAUL : I was joking, dear Stella.

STELLA : Joking or not—that is what you must do. Play the great man. Now, at this moment, you may tell me of your fears. At this moment because we are alone and I love you. But from the time of Procathren's coming here you must act the great man. You must meet this elegant and witty young man with your own elegance and wit. Good gracious me ! From what Mamma told me you were a great one for acting in your day.

[*Paul laughs.*]

Were you ? Then remember that when you meet these people.

PAUL : I wish I had some better clothes.

STELLA : You look very well as you are.

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PAUL : Newer clothes.
STELLA : And Grandpa——
PAUL : Yes ?
STELLA : Also remember—this is a new beginning for you. For twenty-five years—since I was a child, we have been waiting for this moment. Don't fail ! Don't fail, now ! Go to London to-day, meet these people, show them that you are yet alive and active and then—then begin to write again. Do this and you won't have to act the great man—you will be the great man.

[*There is a pause.*]

PAUL : And what do you hope to get out of all this, Stella ?

[*Charles comes into the room from below.*]

STELLA : Nothing—I swear it ! Nothing—I believe in you !
PAUL : Take this cigarette from me.
STELLA : Perhaps they have asked you to return because they need you. Perhaps they are in trouble out there and want your wisdom, your advice. Have you thought of that ?
PAUL : Why should I give them my advice ? They are nothing to me.
CHARLES : Bravo !
PAUL : Hullo, Charles.
STELLA : It is your duty, Grandpa.
CHARLES : Nonsense !
STELLA (*she turns to Charles*) : You, my precious little fellow—and what do you know about it ?—you being a stranger here. You, with your paintings stored away unshown—probably unshowable—and your miserable fears of criticism. Well, Paul does not need to fear criticism. He can go out from here

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into the world—unafraid—disarming criticism and censure by his genius. Then how dare you, a stranger——

CHARLES (*shouting*) : Stella !

[*There is a pause.*]

STELLA : Yes, Charles ?

CHARLES : I want to speak to you.

[*He goes up the stairs.*]

STELLA : Yes, Charles.

[*She follows him up the stairs. Paul, left alone, stares at the newspaper cutting in his hand. From the head of the stairs the voices of Charles and Stella rise together.*]

CHARLES : ——damnable, damnable things !——

STELLA : ——unmeant, unmeant——

CHARLES : ——cruel wickedness, most cruel !——

STELLA : ——not meant. I never mean to—never mean to——

[*Paul, staring at the newspaper cutting, suddenly cries out.*]

PAUL : O God ! O God !

[*There is silence—then Stella calls.*]

STELLA : What is it, Grandpa ?

[*She comes down the stairs.*]

What is it ?

[*Paul holds up the newspaper cutting.*]

PAUL : Stella—Stella, look at this man.

[*Charles comes down the stairs.*]

STELLA : I've seen it, Grandpa. Your nose is running. Wipe it.

CHARLES : Has John Winter gone out ?
STELLA : Yes.
CHARLES : I thought he was going to light the fire before he went.
STELLA : It's more important that we should have the food.
CHARLES : I'm so damned cold. Move over, Paul, and let me have a bit of the stove.
PAUL : Charles. I say, Charles, look at this.

[*He holds out the cutting.*]

CHARLES : Just a minute. Stella——

[*She is combing her hair before a fragment of glass set on the mantlepiece.*]

——when will you have time for me to start work on that last figure ?
STELLA : I don't know.
PAUL : Charles, look !
CHARLES : Just a moment, Paul. Do you think to-day, Stella ?
STELLA : No, not to-day. I shan't have a minute to sit to-day.
CHARLES : Why not when Paul's gone ?
STELLA : Well, I'll see but I don't know.
CHARLES : I've been asking you for the last three weeks.
STELLA : I know.
CHARLES : Now then—what do you want, Paul ?
PAUL : Look at this.

[*Charles takes the cutting.*]

CHARLES : Who is it ?
PAUL : Read it.
CHARLES (*he reads*) : " The Honourable Robert Procathren, distinguished young—— " Oh !

PAUL : Isn't he a grand young fellow ?
CHARLES : Indeed, he is. Stella, have you seen this ?
STELLA : I gave it to Paul.
CHARLES : Where did you find it ?,
STELLA : Among some old magazines of yours.
PAUL : Look ! Look, Charles, what do they say ?
CHARLES : " ——distinguished young poet and critic—— "
PAUL : " ——distinguished young poet and critic —— "
CHARLES (*he nudges Paul*) : Paul, my old one——
PAUL (*giggling with anticipation*) : Yes ? Yes, sonny, yes ?
CHARLES : A splendid young man. Isn't he, Stella ? Paul—Paul, tell me——
PAUL : Yes, sonny ? Yes, what ?
CHARLES : Isn't he the kind of young man Stella admires—very much admires ? Clean, upright, bold——
PAUL : Yes ? Yes ?
CHARLES : ——full of a passionate desire—for life. Not like us, my ancient—not like you and me—being, as we are, despised by Stella. No, she'd admire him—this Procathren——
STELLA (*she turns and shouts*) : I'm not going to quarrel with you !
CHARLES : ——admire him very much for what he is and for what he does—the conduct of his life. Yes, Stella would love him—love him dearly——
STELLA : Damn you, Charles ! Damn you !
CHARLES : And what is he, Paul, this Procathren——?
PAUL : Tell me—tell me !
CHARLES : He is a man. And being a man may we conjecture what he would say to a woman like Stella ? I think we may.
PAUL : Yes, I think we may.

CHARLES : He would say that he looks upon life as an adventure and upon death as an enemy to be fought with desperation. Age as something to be accepted with dignity—women also. A man lacking in pathos but not lacking in attraction. Therefore, a man clean, temperate, respectable, responsible——

STELLA : I shall leave the room !

CHARLES : ——restrained, realistic, reasonable——

PAUL : A lovely man !

CHARLES : A fashionable man. His verse turned out as effortlessly as his personal appearance. Smooth thoughts soothing in their catholic simplicity. Love poems—ah, Stella !—a delicious liquidity—casually inspired by the contemplation of his elegant mistress's inner thighs. Not like you——

[*He nudges Paul, who giggles.*]

——not like your blasphemous, bawdy, scraggy limericks. Yes, Stella, I once knew these beautiful poets. They smell. They smell very nice but they smell.

STELLA : You're jealous.

CHARLES : Yes, my love.

STELLA : You ! You lack attraction but, my God ! you don't lack pathos ! As you are now—as you are sitting there now—I could weep for you——

CHARLES : There's someone——

STELLA : Weep for you !

CHARLES : There's someone on the stairs.

[*Footsteps can be heard coming up the stairs from below.*]

STELLA : Listen !

CHARLES : It's probably him.

[*To Paul.*]

Here he comes to take you away.

STELLA : Behave yourselves ! Are you ready ?
CHARLES : Ready.

[*Charles rises and, standing behind Paul, whispers :*]

Your flies are undone.

[*Paul looks, finds they are not undone, and laughs.*]

STELLA : Be quiet !

[*She is about to move to the door when it is opened from the outside and John Winter comes into the room. He is carrying parcels of food. Charles and Paul shout with laughter.*]

CHARLES : The distinguished critic !
PAUL : Do I bow, or curtsy, or salute, or——

[*Laughing, he proceeds to do all these things.*]

STELLA : You make me look a fool, John Winter.
WINTER : I'm sorry.
CHARLES : Blame me, Stella. Blame me.
STELLA : You've got the food. Good.

[*She takes the parcels from John Winter.*]

I've told you I'm going to cook to-day's meal ?
WINTER : Yes.
STELLA : I want you to take Mr Southman upstairs to his room now. He is to rest until Mr Procathren arrives.
WINTER : Very well.
STELLA : Do you hear me, Paul ?
PAUL : Yes, but I'm all right.
STELLA : Nevertheless, you're going to rest now.
PAUL : See anything of Procathren in the village, John Winter ?
WINTER : No, sir. There's been——

[*He is interrupted by Stella. The following conversations between John Winter—Stella and Paul—Charles take place simultaneously.*]

S. : This is the meat ?

W. : Yes.

S. : What is it ?

W. : Beef.

S. : We have vegetables?

W. : Yes.

S. : Will you prepare them ?

W. : Yes. That's the dried fruit.

S. : Good. Where's the coffee ?

W. : I couldn't get any. That's what I——

S. : Why not ? We've none at all.

W. : I know that. If you'll allow me——

S. : I suppose they wouldn't let you have it.

W. : There's been trouble in the village.

S. : What ?

W. : There's been trouble in the village.

C. : Probably lost his way.

P. : No. He's clever.

C. : Perhaps he's changed his mind.

P. : Why ?

C. : Decided not to come and see a dirty old man like you.

P. : Charles.

C. : Yes ?

P. : I don't want to go to rest.

C. : Tell her.

P. : You tell her.

C. : It'll do you good.

P. : You think I ought to go ?

C. : Yes, I think so.

P. : All right.

C. : You needn't sleep. You can read.

P. : Will you come and read to me ?

S. : Paul ! Charles ! Do you hear that ?

C. : John Winter will. I've found a copy of *Alice* among my stuff. Would you like that ? I'll give it to you for an extra birthday present.

CHARLES : What ?

STELLA : Something's happened in the village.

CHARLES : Well, what ?

STELLA : Come along, John Winter, let's have it.

WINTER (*he speaks directly to Paul*) : The reports in the village are confused, sir, but I have been able to gather a little information.

PAUL : Well ?

WINTER : Three private soldiers have escaped from a detention camp. They have made their way to the village and it is believed they slept last night in the village hall. This morning, at an early hour, they broke out of the hall and began marauding and looting in the village. Although unarmed they terrorised the villagers. Having obtained food they retired and are now hiding at some place in the surrounding country.

PAUL : Thank you, John Winter. An excellent and lucid report.

WINTER : Thank you, sir.

STELLA (*to Charles*) : He'll salute in a moment.

PAUL : Let us appreciate the situation.

STELLA : Surely——

PAUL : Be quiet, Stella. Well, John Winter, have you anything to suggest ?

WINTER : I can see no immediate danger to yourself, sir, from the situation at present. By their actions the soldiers have automatically allied themselves with us

although ignorant of our aims and even of our existence. Indeed, by their actions they have caused a diversion in the village admirably suited to the day of your visit to London.

PAUL : You think the villagers might have interfered with my going ?

WINTER : I had reports to that effect, sir.

PAUL : And you said nothing ?

WINTER : I was prepared, sir.

PAUL : The idea of an alliance with these soldiers against the villagers must be considered. Perhaps we could offer this house as——

STELLA : Stop playing at being soldiers yourselves for a minute and listen to me. You are both going to London to-day for an express purpose. This is no time to indulge in your fancy for campaigning.

[*Paul and John Winter are silent.*]

All right, Captain Winter. Take General Southman to his room.

PAUL : Stella, I——

STELLA : Go along, Grandpa. You can hatch your revolutionary schemes as well up there as you can down here.

[*John Winter takes Paul's arm and they begin to move to the stairs.*]

PAUL : Where's that copy of *Alice*, Charles ?

CHARLES : I'll bring it to you.

STELLA : You're not to read. You're to rest.

PAUL : Charles said I could read.

STELLA : No, you're to rest.

[*Paul and John Winter have gone up the stairs.*]

Did you hear them ? Ridiculous ! Two old men with their stupid attempts at military phrases and reports.

Did you hear them? "Situation—immediate danger—diversion—an alliance".

CHARLES: Yes, I heard them.

STELLA: Absurd!

CHARLES: But I thought—I may have been mistaken—I thought that you appreciated a very real danger from the villagers.

STELLA: I do. It is a very real danger. If the villagers could organise themselves or could be moved by a moment's rage they would come here and kill us all. At present they suffer from no more than a grievance. And they have cause—they have cause for the grievance and for hating us. When Paul came here—when he withdrew himself from the world that attacked him—he chose the village to be his butt. I remember the things he said——

[*She has taken two loose cigarettes from the pocket of her dress. She throws one to Charles.*]

——here—catch!—I remember the things he said about the village when I was a child—unforgivable, beastly and unprovoked. Paul was then no longer in a position to attack his equals and so his abuse, the result of hurt pride, was directed against the villagers. It was unprovoked because he had no quarrel with them but for their sanity and security. Soon they felt—under his attack—they felt their security gone and with it their sanity. The satire that had recently shaken the world was directed against them—against a few miserable peasants in a ramshackle hamlet. They reacted in the way of the world and, as Paul would say, "declared war on us". That war has continued since my childhood. It has coloured my life—the threat of violence to this tortured family. And so, Charles, I am frightened to hear such nonsense talked by Paul—with encouragement from

John Winter—when we need expert and serious conspiracy to save our lives. Reason tells us that we cannot fight the villagers—we cannot do it and so we must get away—run away, if you like. That is what we must do. But how? I can do nothing—you can do nothing—we are useless, helpless and wretched and must appeal to the one man capable of saving us —Procathren. I know! I know he is a poor specimen in your eyes but we must appeal to him. He may help us. You must admit that we need help and I have no pride in such matters. I have no pride at all. But try to remember, Charles, that I am a woman—try to be conscious of that at other times than when I am naked. I am a woman and I have a child inside me. Does that explain anything to you? Pregnant women have delusions, they say. Do they? I know nothing about it. Am I deluded, Charles? Am I? I only know that I am possessed by a loneliness hard to bear—a loneliness which I should imagine attends forsaken lovers.

[*She stands silent—then :*]

Lovers. I am innocent of such things. I have imagined what they do and what they say—these lovers. It seems they find a great delight in music and solicitude, in whispering and smiling, in touching and nakedness, in night. And from these things they make a fabric of memory which will serve them well in their life after death when they will be together but alone. They are wise for that is the purpose of any memory—of any experience—to give foundation to the state of death. Understand that whatever we do to-day in this house—this damned house—will provide some of the material for our existence in death and you understand my fear. No one who has lived

as I have lived could be happy in death. It is impossible. They speak of us turning in our graves when a slighting word is spoken of us. No, the words were spoken during our life-time and it is the memory which causes the unrest. The family—my mother, my father and my sister—out there in the row of graves—what did they store up, I wonder? Dadda who fell from grace in the world when Paul fell and spent the rest of his life living on the charity of the old man—what does he remember? Mamma—magnificent, angry Mamma—is she happy in the memory of her justice? Ellen, who died at twenty years, perhaps happy in the memory of my love for her. As for myself, if I die to-day, my eternal happiness will depend on the tiny memory of you, Charles—you, on your first visit to this place—standing in the doorway—(*she smiles*)—consciously picaresque—and handing me the flowers from your hat. I thought then that we were to be lovers but from our marriage you gave me no understanding—no explanation of the mysteries—only a child conceived in violence. Therefore I must ask a stranger. I can use no female tricks on him—I am not a young girl—I am unused to laughter and my mind is always slow to understand. I can use neither wit nor beauty—I can only appeal to his charity to take me away from this place. Perhaps I can go with him as his servant.

[*She pauses. Charles is turned away from her. As Stella begins to speak again there is a single note blown on a trumpet: distant and from the direction of the village.*]

Why don't you speak? Now! Why don't you speak, now? You could have released me—you could have freed me from this place if only you could have overcome your fear of the world out there and returned yourself. Even now you could kill my black,

desperate, damnable fear of all time being empty if you would tell me—show me how to love. I am human and I am a woman. Tell me. And, O, Charles, Charles, comfort me!

[*He is about to move to her when the trumpet is blown again. It is nearer and blatant, raucous, defiant. Charles and Stella, hearing this, stare at each other.*]

CHARLES: What is it?
STELLA: I don't know.

[*The trumpet is blown again.*]

CHARLES: Listen!

[*Paul calls from his room upstairs.*]

PAUL: What's that?
STELLA: I don't know, Grandpa. O God! I don't know.
CHARLES: It was nearer.
STELLA: Yes. Nearer.
PAUL: What is it? What is that noise?

[*The trumpet is being blown.*]

*Curtain*

# ACT TWO

*The scene is the same.*

*The time : four hours later—early afternoon.*

*A fire has been lit.*

*Paul and Stella are sitting at the table ; they have just finished a meal. A place is laid for Charles who is absent from the room. John Winter is going about clearing away the remains of the meal.*

*There is silence until Paul, suddenly turning to Stella, asks :*

PAUL : What did you say ?
STELLA : Some minutes ago I answered your question and said, " It sounded once more in the distance, then ceased ".
PAUL : What was it ?
STELLA : I don't know.
PAUL : It was a trumpet, I know that—but what does it mean ? Did you see anything ?
STELLA : We didn't look.

[*She puts her face in her hands.*]

WINTER : Have you finished with this, sir ?

[*He indicates Paul's plate.*]

PAUL : What ? Yes. Yes, thank you.

[*John Winter removes the plate.*]

Some trick of the villagers, perhaps.
STELLA : They've never dared to come so near to the house before.
PAUL : No. They're getting really mischievous. Did it frighten you ?
STELLA : Very much.
PAUL : Mustn't be frightened.

[*He stares across the room.*]

What's the time?

STELLA: Five and twenty minutes to two.

PAUL: You know, I can't see very well now. It isn't so long ago that I could see that clock from here. Five and twenty minutes to two.

[*In silence he takes up a fork and scores deep marks into the table-cloth.*]

He's not coming, is he?

STELLA: Procathren?

PAUL: Yes.

STELLA: Of course he is. Don't do that. He's probably been——

PAUL: He's changed his mind as Charles said he would. Decided not to come and see me.

STELLA: It's early yet.

PAUL: No. He's changed his mind.

STELLA: Grandpa—would you care very much if he didn't come?

PAUL: Well, yes. Yes, I should be disappointed.

STELLA: Wipe your mouth, darling.

[*He does so. Charles comes running down the stairs into the room. He carries a book which he throws on to the table before Paul.*]

PAUL: Hullo, Charles!

[*He laughs.*]

CHARLES: That's the copy of *Alice in Wonderland* I promised you.

PAUL: Thank you, Charles. Stella, can I have something to drink?

STELLA: Water?

PAUL: Yes, please.

STELLA : Get some water, John Winter.

[*John Winter goes out to the kitchens with the dishes. Paul sits looking at the book.*]

CHARLES : He's not come yet ?

[*He stands behind Stella with his hands on her shoulders. Her hands go up to his.*]

STELLA : No.
CHARLES : I hope he comes.
STELLA : For my sake ?
PAUL : What's that ?
CHARLES : Nothing, Paul, nothing.
STELLA : He should have been here by now if they're going to get to London.
CHARLES : Yes. You thought he'd be here for this meal ?
STELLA : Yes, I did. I don't know why.
PAUL : Has John Winter brought the water yet ?
STELLA : No, not yet. Oh, here it is.

[*John Winter has entered with a jug of water and some glasses.*]

PAUL : I'll pour it out. Have you fed the dog, John Winter ?
WINTER : Yes, sir. Some time ago.
PAUL : It must be very cold out of doors. If he wants to come in you are to allow it.
WINTER : He seems to want to stay out.
PAUL : Was he frightened by that noise ?
WINTER : I don't know, sir.
CHARLES : Have you heard it again ?
STELLA : No. John Winter, will you keep a look-out for Mr Procathren ? I suggest from upstairs.
PAUL : He's not coming !
STELLA : Run along, John Winter.

[*John Winter goes up the stairs.*]

PAUL (*chants*) : He's not coming ! He's not coming ! He's not coming after all, at all.

STELLA : Shut up, Grandpa ! And having made so much fuss about the water why don't you drink it ? Charles, I want you to——

[*Paul, having sipped the water, suddenly reads from the book :*]

PAUL : " Once I was a real Turtle."

[*He pantomimes a great sigh : the book falls to the floor.*]

Then the world wasn't big enough for me to live in. Every time I raised my voice I banged my head. What a fine, brave, gay little chap I was—the world had never seen my like, it said.

[*Charles and Stella are whispering together.*]

How I made them laugh—how they loved me. Have you ever heard—felt the roar of applause—like the thunder of blood in your head ? But—pity !——

Little Southman's come a cropper
Because he wrote an awful whopper
Telling Kings and Princes too
Just how much they ought to do.
Poor old Paul !
What a fall !
Whoo-ah !

That's what they sang when " The Abolition of Printing " had been written and I was on my way here. And it was true. What a fall ! Whoo-ah !

STELLA : Say something, Charles, and stop him rambling.

CHARLES : Boo !

PAUL : What's that ? You, who wouldn't say Boo to a goose dare say Boo to a Southman ? I, who was once a real Turtle—am I now less than a goose ?
STELLA : You're an old goose to talk such nonsense, Paul.
PAUL : Quack-quack !
CHARLES : Whither do you wander ?
PAUL : Upstairs and downstairs and in my lady's chamber.
CHARLES : Not any longer, you don't.
PAUL : It's my legs—they've gone weak.
CHARLES : Only your legs ?
PAUL : I know what you mean, you dirty boy. Blank cartridge. But you'd have been proud of me once, ducky. I was full of the stuff of life when I wrote the " Abolition ". Then I went neither upstairs nor downstairs but straight into my lady Society's chamber and lifted the skirts of the old whore. A rough customer—but she kindly displayed her deformities. Then it was whoops with the what-d'you-call-'em—Hullo, Mr So-and-so !—why, bless me, here's the thingamegig—ssh !—the tiger's gone into the forest—be a man—be a man—deliver the goods.

[*He snaps his fingers. Robert Procathren has come up the stairs and is standing in the doorway of the room. He is unseen by Paul, Stella and Charles.*]

And when I had performed the obscene gesture what a rush there was to restore the disarray of the filthy old bag. What a-neighing and a-braying to assure her that nothing had been revealed to her detriment. Andrew Vince pulled up the knickers and John Ussleigh pulled down the skirts and Arthur Howell took me, the raper, into custody. The accusation against Paul Frederick Southman !

[*He beats on the arm of his chair.*]

" Paul Frederick Southman : you are charged with the assault of the well-known and much-beloved whore, Society, in that you did, with malice and humour, reveal her for what she is and not for what men wish her to be thereby destroying the illusion of youth and the wisdom of age. Also that you employed the perversion of using for this purpose your pen instead of the recognised organ." Witnesses called for the prosecution. Andrew Vince : this witness testified the poor old body to be sadly shaken by her experience and vehemently denied the defence's suggestion that he had rummaged her after finding her crying in the alley. John Ussleigh : this witness, a publisher, stated that he saw the assault but had been under the impression that it was a case of true love. He had known the prisoner for a number o years, etc., etc. An unnamed young man : this witness, called for medical evidence, admitted intercourse with Society on several occasions. When asked by the defence whether he was not repelled by the malformations of Society, he answered, " I thought all women were like that ". Witnesses called for the defence : none. Sentence : exile.

[*He sees Robert Procathren. The two men stare at each other across the room. Stella turns to recognise Robert at once.*]

STELLA : Mr Procathren.
ROBERT : That's right.
STELLA : I'm Stella Heberden.
ROBERT : How do you do.
STELLA : How do you do. This is my grandfather, Paul Southman, and my husband, Charles.
ROBERT : How do you do.

STELLA : Won't you come in ?
ROBERT : Thank you. I've left my car some distance away. I could find no road to the house.
STELLA : There isn't one.
ROBERT : I suppose the car will be all right.
STELLA : I'm sure it will be.

[*There is a pause and then Robert moves towards Paul, and, smiling at him, says :*]

ROBERT : Well, sir, this is a great occasion for me.
PAUL : How do you do. Stella !
ROBERT : May I say, Many happy returns of the day.
PAUL : Thank you very much.
ROBERT : I feel there is no necessity for——
CHARLES : Have you had lunch, Mr Procathren ?
ROBERT : What ? Yes. Yes, thank you—I have. Surely, Mr. Southman, there is no necessity for formality between us on this occasion but there are a few things I should like to say. Have I your permission ?

[*Paul is silent.*]

STELLA : Please go on.
ROBERT : Thank you. I'll be brief. (*He speaks to Paul.*) What I am doing in coming here to-day——
PAUL : Did John Winter say he'd fed the dog ?
STELLA : Yes, Grandpa. (*To Robert.*) You must forgive him.
ROBERT : Of course. I appreciate the honour you do me in allowing me to come here, to this house, to-day —this house which has been closed to the world for so many years. You withdrew yourself from us, and with yourself your advice and guidance, to punish us for our treatment of you and your ideas. At the time of the attacks on you I was nine years of age and

therefore rather too young actively to participate in your defence. I have had to wait until to-day when I hope to be able—in the following few hours—to wipe out the memory of the hatred and violence that was inflicted on you twenty-five years ago by your fellow artists. As a young man my own work was deeply influenced by——

PAUL: What does he say?

ROBERT: No more. I shall say no more. There remains only this: as a material token of our appreciation of your nobility of attitude I have been asked to bring you this book.

[*He has taken a leather-bound folio from the brief-case he carries. This book he lays on the table before Paul who makes no attempt to open it.*]

With it may I wish you the best of health and happiness and, again, many happy returns of the day.

[*Paul nods his head.*]

STELLA: Well, have a look at the book, Grandpa.

[*Paul shakes his head.*]

What do you say? Oh, he hasn't got his glasses.

ROBERT: I'm so sorry. I didn't realise that. May I——

[*He takes back the book and opens it.*]

In this book you will find some sixty-odd appreciations both in prose and verse—they are all, of course, in autograph. Here are Harold Prospect, Richard Lewis Cameron, Helen Newsome, George Reeves and many others writing in honour of Paul Frederick Southman.

[*He holds out the book to Paul.*]



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PAUL : I was a real Turtle once, wasn't I ?

[*He takes the book.*]

STELLA : Don't be silly, Grandpa.
ROBERT : Now, Mrs Heberden——
STELLA : Yes ?
ROBERT : I don't want to bother Mr Southman—so may I tell you about the arrangements I have made for to-day ?
STELLA : Certainly.
ROBERT : Well, Mr Southman will have to walk to the car, I'm afraid—that is possible, isn't it ?
STELLA : He has a little cart we sometimes pull him around in—he could use that.
ROBERT : Excellent. Now, we should start from here about four-thirty.

[*He looks at the clock—then at his watch.*]

Surely your clock is exactly an hour fast.
STELLA : Yes. Yes, it is. It's broken.
ROBERT : We should get to London by seven o'clock giving Mr Southman time for a short rest before the dinner.

[*Paul and Charles have been whispering over the book of appreciations. Suddenly Paul's voice is raised :*]

PAUL : No, no, Charles ! A very nice young man !

[*Robert smiles at Stella and continues :*]

ROBERT : The dinner will be a formal affair. Many people wish to meet Mr Southman—I hope it won't tire him—he must say immediately if it does. There will be some speeches—we are hoping that he is going to speak but——
STELLA : I think he will—but he's very frightened, you know.

[*Very distantly the trumpet sounds.*]

It is a fear that he is no longer——

ROBERT : What was that ?

STELLA : I heard nothing.

PAUL : There it is again, Stella.

ROBERT : What is it, sir ? A barracks ?

CHARLES : No. We've no ideas about it, have we, Paul ?

[*Paul and Charles grin at each other.*]

ROBERT : A train, perhaps.

CHARLES : There are no trains round here.

[*There is a pause. Then Robert laughs and continues to speak to Stella.*]

ROBERT : I should tell you, Mrs Heberden, that there will be the presentation of a cheque to Mr Southman to-night. A certain sum of money has been collected by—— What did you say ?

STELLA : I said, I'd like to speak to you about that.

ROBERT : Certainly.

STELLA : Later. You're leaving at half-past four, Grandpa. (*To Robert.*) His man, John Winter, will travel with him. That's all right, isn't it ?

ROBERT : Quite all right.

STELLA : So you'll be ready, won't you, Grandpa ?

PAUL : Stella !

STELLA : Yes ? (*She moves to him.*) It's all right, darling ! It's all right (*She puts her arms around him.*) You see, Mr Procathren did come after all. (*To Robert.*) He was so frightened—so afraid that you weren't coming. Weren't you, darling ?

[*She kisses Paul.*]

ROBERT (*going to the mural painting*): This is your work, Mr Heberden?

CHARLES: Yes.

ROBERT: Interesting. I can't recall seeing anything of yours since the famous show—when was it?—four years ago.

CHARLES: Five.

ROBERT: Five, was it? Anyway, when you were the infant prodigy startling the country with your engravings to the "Purgatorio".

CHARLES: That exhibition was a mistake.

ROBERT: For one so young? Perhaps.

CHARLES: I meant otherwise.

ROBERT: If you have any other new work I should be most interested to see it.

CHARLES: For recognition in your literary reviews?

ROBERT: I assure you——

CHARLES: I have nothing. I have ceased to comment upon a society I have forsaken.

ROBERT: But surely, Mr Heberden, the essence——

CHARLES: Did you have a good journey from London, Mr Procathren?

ROBERT: I didn't come from London. I came from Oxford.

CHARLES: I see.

ROBERT: I live there.

STELLA: Did you come through the village?

ROBERT: Yes.

STELLA: It was quiet?

ROBERT: There seemed to be no one about—but I drove through very quickly. Why?

STELLA: No reason.

ROBERT: As a matter of fact, I had intended to start earlier and stop in the village to call on the rector. The Reverend Giles Aldus. Do you know him? (*They are silent.*) He has a library—it has been left in his

care—a small collection but it sounds most interesting. You've heard of it, no doubt.

STELLA : No.

ROBERT : No ? I was going to call and ask him if I might see it. They are books of a religious nature—almost legendary as they've never been catalogued. Aldus has never allowed it. I'm told he lives with his mother and both she and the books he keeps from contact with the world. I'm not particularly interested in his mother but I should've liked to have seen the books. However, there was time to see neither. By the way, Mrs Heberden, I must apologise for walking into the house as I did but I could find no bell or knocker.

CHARLES : We have very few callers.

ROBERT (*he laughs*) : I nearly fell over a dog in the doorway. I meant to mention this before. There's a——

STELLA : Oh, dear ! I hope he didn't annoy you.

ROBERT : No, he didn't annoy me.

PAUL : He doesn't annoy people.

ROBERT : How could he ? He's dead.

[*There is a pause : Robert laughs.*]

Is that your dog ? I didn't know. I thought——

[*Paul has risen to his feet. He shouts :*]

PAUL : John Winter !

STELLA : Paul—Paul !

PAUL (*to Charles*) : Get John Winter !

[*Charles is about to move to the stairs when John Winter comes down into the room.*]

John Winter !

WINTER : Yes ?

PAUL : John Winter, this man says my dog is dead.
WINTER : Where—— ?
PAUL : This man says my dog is dead.
WINTER : Where is it ?
ROBERT : In the doorway—down—— (*He points.*)

[*John Winter runs from the room.*]

PAUL : Help me—Charles, you fool—help me !
STELLA : Paul, you're not to——

[*Charles has taken Paul's arm and is assisting him across the room.*]

PAUL : I must go down—I must go down !

[*He shouts down the stairs.*]

John Winter ! Is it true ? John Winter, is it true ?

[*Paul and Charles go from the room to descend the stairs.*]

STELLA : O God ! O dear Christ !

[*She has moved to the table and, unseeing, beats down with her fist on to the presentation book.*]

ROBERT : Be careful of that book, please !
STELLA : What ?
ROBERT : The book. Please be careful.

[*He removes the book from under her hand.*]

I am most distressed, Mrs Heberden. I had no idea that the dog—you see, I tripped over the carcase and —I thought—well, I really don't know what I thought—the thing was still warm. I must apologise but at the time——
STELLA : ——you had something very much more important to think about ?
ROBERT : Well, yes.

STELLA : The presentation to Mr Southman.
ROBERT : Exactly.
STELLA : And I agree, Mr Procathren.
ROBERT : What ? That——
STELLA : That the presentation was more important than a dead dog.
ROBERT : Thank you.

[*During this conversation between Robert and Stella there is heard from the foot of the stairs at the main door :*]

CHARLES (*his voice rising to audibility*) : ——and we need proof. We don't know anything.
PAUL : Proof ! I want no more proof of their intentions. Look at it—look at it —it lies there—dead ! Dead !
CHARLES : Paul—Paul ! Stop it !

[*There is the sound of some heavy object being thrown to the ground.*]

Paul—come here ! Stop him, John Winter !

[*The main door of the house is thrown open and Paul can be heard shouting :*]

PAUL : Come out ! Come out, you toads ! Why do you hide ? You were not afraid of an old dog—why be afraid of an old man ? Come out and let me see you !

[*His last words become a long howl of grief.*]

STELLA : We must hope—we must pray that——
ROBERT : Yes, Mrs Heberden ?

[*There is a pause.*]

STELLA : ——that he will go with you this afternoon. I promise he shall go with you. This will make no difference at all. He shall go with you to London and he will be all right. He will be all right.

ROBERT : We must hope so. Please don't be upset, Mrs Heberden. I can understand this. An old man—an animal beloved of him——

STELLA : But we must get him away from here soon. You said half-past four——

ROBERT : Yes.

STELLA : It must be before that. As soon as possible. At once !

ROBERT : Very well.

STELLA : He'll arrive early in London but there must be somewhere he can go, surely.

ROBERT : My flat.

STELLA : He can wait there ?

ROBERT : With pleasure.

STELLA : Good.

ROBERT : He'll be all right there, I can assure you. He can rest and during that time——

STELLA : Mr Procathren.

ROBERT : Yes ?

STELLA : Help me.

ROBERT : How ?

STELLA : Help me.

ROBERT : In what way ?

STELLA : Please !

ROBERT : In what way can I help you ?

STELLA : I had prepared what I was going to say to you.

ROBERT : Then please say it.

STELLA : You will help me ?

ROBERT : In any way I can, but——

STELLA : There's very little time.

ROBERT : Before they return ? I promise to look after the old gentleman, if that's what you mean.
STELLA : Yes. Yes, of course you must look after him.
ROBERT : I will.
STELLA : Sir ! Sir, our future is in your hands.
ROBERT : You must forgive me, I——
STELLA : Our future is in your most beautiful delicate hands.
ROBERT : You must forgive me but I don't understand you.
STELLA : You are young, you are famous and powerful, you are talented and you can do as I ask.
ROBERT (*he laughs*) : I am a minor poet—nothing more.
STELLA : Why do you laugh ?
ROBERT : I don't know.
STELLA : At this moment—why do you laugh ?
ROBERT : Shyness, I suppose. I am shy.
STELLA : I'm sorry but there's no time for the courtesies and formalities as between strangers. You mustn't expect them from me. But please don't withdraw. A moment ago you were willing to help me.
ROBERT : I don't understand what you want.
STELLA : This ! This is what I want ! I want Paul to be restored to his former greatness. In that way there can be a future for my child.
ROBERT : Your child ?
STELLA : I'm pregnant. The child Paul. Innocent, you will admit—in no way responsible. For this child's sake old Paul must be restored to greatness in the world.
ROBERT : But he is a great man now. No restoration is necessary.
STELLA : No, he is not a great man now, but——
ROBERT : I came here to-day to see a great man.

STELLA : ——we can restore him. And this is the way. Listen—this is the way.
ROBERT : There is nothing I can do.
STELLA : Nothing can be done to-day, certainly. Nothing, beyond our having you take him to London. But in the future we can act. You promised to help me——
ROBERT : Really, I——
STELLA : You promised to help me ! And you can help me in this way : until you can get us away from this place keep in touch with me—by letter, in person—I'll get away to London to see you if you wish—but by some means—by any means !—we must retain contact.
ROBERT : I can see no point in this.
STELLA : Such a small thing to ask. Be gracious, sir—you have so much—be gracious to the poor.

[*There is a pause. Robert turns away.*]

What can I offer you ?
ROBERT : Nothing.
STELLA : You can be godfather to my child.
ROBERT : I am an atheist.

[*Footsteps can be heard coming up the stairs.*]

STELLA : Together we can do so much for Paul. Apart we——
ROBERT (*he has heard the footsteps*) : All right !
STELLA : You will help me ?
ROBERT : Yes.
STELLA : God bless you !
ROBERT : I'll keep in touch with you by letter but you must instruct me. I've no idea what you intend. They're coming back.
STELLA : I will instruct you, as you put it, in our first

letters. It is decided then—you and I can go together now. But I must have a token from you.

ROBERT : A token ?

STELLA : A material token. That will do.

[*She indicates the signet ring* Robert *is wearing.*]

ROBERT : This ?

STELLA : Yes.

[*She holds out her hand to him. He removes the ring and puts it on a finger of her left hand. As he is doing this* Paul *comes into the room from below. He moves quickly and breathlessly across the room to the further stairs.* Stella *calls to him :*]

Paul !

[*He does not answer but continues up the stairs to the upper floor.* Stella *speaks again to* Robert :]

You mentioned a cheque to be presented.

ROBERT : Yes.

STELLA : It must come to me.

ROBERT : I don't think I can do that.

STELLA : You can contrive some trick.

[*Robert still holds Stella's left hand from the giving of the ring.*]

ROBERT : Some trick. Is that what you're up to, Mrs Heberden ?

[*Charles enters from below.*]

CHARLES : Where is he ?

STELLA : He's gone to his room. Is the dog dead ?

CHARLES : Yes.

STELLA : How is he going to take it ?

CHARLES : In anger. Listen! (*There is silence.*) I thought

I heard him. (*He smiles at Robert and Stella.*) Have you two settled the future?

STELLA: Yes, we have. (*To Robert.*) Haven't we?

[*Robert, in an agony of embarrassment, moves away from her.*]

CHARLES: Excellent!

[*He laughs.*]

STELLA: I'm going to call Paul.

CHARLES: No, Stella—no, let him come down in his own time.

STELLA: You said he was angry. Did you say that?

CHARLES: I did.

STELLA: But why? Why anger?

CHARLES: He's convinced that the villagers poisoned the dog.

STELLA: Did they?

CHARLES: No, I don't think so. It must have died of old age.

STELLA: What a day to choose to die! (*Charles is laughing at her.*) It should have waited until to-morrow.

[*Suddenly, she laughs too, and, continuing to laugh, she speaks:*]

It should have waited until to-morrow when Paul would have been away. However, we must deal with this—this catastrophe.

[*She goes to Charles and puts her hands on his shoulders.*]

It will take more than the death of a dog to deter me. You see, Charles, I'm no longer alone. I now have an ally who is prepared with me. Mr Procathren has promised to help me.

ROBERT : One moment, Mrs Heberden. I feel I must define the limits of my obligations. They are these : to come here to-day, not only on my own behalf but also on behalf of my committee : to present Mr Southman with the book of appreciations and our congratulations on his birthday : to drive him to London for the dinner to-night and during that time to accept personal responsibility for his safety : to return him to this house to-morrow. Those are the limits of my formal obligations—but—I have promised one thing further—to keep in touch with you by letter in the future. I will do that—but it does not mean, Mrs Heberden—(*his voice becomes uncontrolled*)—it does not mean that I am prepared to become engaged in a partisan way in any family feud or intrigue. What you are attempting to do and how you are attempting to entangle me—indeed, why—I do not understand. But kindly remember I have stated my obligations and I am not going beyond them.

[*Paul is coming down the stairs into the room.*]

CHARLES (*to Stella*) : As an ally I prefer a dead dog.

[*Paul comes into the room. Beneath his arm he carries a large automatic pistol ; he has removed the clip and is loading it with cartridges. There is a change in his manner. Towards Robert he is friendly, almost familiar—no longer afraid. He speaks with a clear and forceful articulation.*)

PAUL : I must admit that even with my daily care of this weapon I have always looked upon it as being for defence, never for revenge.
STELLA : What are you going to do ?
PAUL : You must forgive us, Mr Procathren—Robert —I may call you Robert, may I not ?——
ROBERT : Certainly.

PAUL : You must forgive us, Robert, for engaging you in this business.

[*He inserts the magazine into the pistol.*]

I trust your sympathies are with us.
ROBERT : I know nothing of the circumstances, sir.
STELLA : What are you going to do, Grandpa ?
PAUL : Whatever I do it will be with this !

[*He lays the pistol down heavily on the table.*]

The circumstances, Robert, are these. For many years past now the occupants of this house have suffered victimisation by the villagers. The reason has never been clear to me. Perhaps it is based on some delusion with regard to our social standing. Perhaps our being artists—I don't know. But I no longer require reasons. The act—the act of poisoning my dog—is enough.
STELLA : The dog died of old age.
PAUL : Don't be silly, child. This, Robert, is the first direct move they have made. For years the threat has existed—but, although very real, it was no more than a threat. It lasted so long without action that it became a family joke—eh, Charles ?—Stella ?—but this is an act and must be answered by as direct and cruel an act. Where is John Winter ?
STELLA : I want to know what you are intending to do. Are you forgetting that you go to London to-day ?
PAUL : No, I am not forgetting that—and I shall go.
STELLA : You will ?
PAUL : Most certainly. Where is John Winter ?
STELLA : He hasn't come up yet. And you are going to London ?
PAUL : Don't worry, darling—I shall go. At about four o'clock, you said, Robert ?

ROBERT : Yes, sir. We should start by then.
PAUL : In that case, I must hurry. Now then—we are one—two—three—four men with John Winter and one woman. With the three soldiers we shall be seven men.
STELLA : Soldiers ?
PAUL : The soldiers that have escaped from prison. John Winter mentioned them. The soldiers that have anticipated us in their attack on the village. I propose to form an alliance with them. But, first of all, we must find them. I want you, Charles, to do that—and perhaps you, Robert, would care——
ROBERT : I don't wish to be involved in this, sir.

[*There is silence. Paul stares at Robert, his hand going out to touch the pistol. He withdraws and turns to Charles.*]

PAUL : Then you will go with John Winter, Charles. Bring these soldiers back here—I want to talk to them.
ROBERT : Mr Southman !

[*Paul turns to Robert.*]

You must understand my position. I cannot—dare not become engaged in something that is of no personal—no personal——
PAUL : Advantage, Mr Procathren ?
ROBERT : No, sir ! Not advantage, but——
PAUL : I have explained the circumstances to you. You are an intelligent man—you have undoubtedly understood. Will you or will you not help me ?
ROBERT : My personal position——
PAUL : I don't understand your doubt and hesitation. With your admiration of myself surely you believe what I have told you to be true.
ROBERT : Of course.
PAUL : We need your help.

ROBERT : I will help you in any indirect way that I can——

PAUL : No qualifications ! Will you or will you not help me ? I shall not ask again.

[*There is a pause.*]

ROBERT : I will.

STELLA : You are being untrue to me !

ROBERT : What can I do ? What else can I do ?

STELLA (*she cries out*) : Then what is going to happen ?

[*There is a complete cessation of activity whilst Stella speaks. She is swept by a sudden storm of fore-knowledge—awful in its clarity. The men, silent and unmoving, watch her.*]

Careful ! We are approaching the point of deviation. At one moment there is laughter and conversation and a progression : people move and speak smoothly and casually, their breathing is controlled and they know what they do. Then there occurs a call from another room, the realisation that a member of the assembly is missing, the sudden shout into the dream and the waking to find the body with the failing heart lying in the corridor—with the twisted limbs at the foot of the stairs—the man hanging from the beam or the child floating drowned in the garden pool. Careful ! Be careful ! We are approaching that point. The moment of the call from another room.

[*She pauses.*]

Give me another of your cigarettes, Paul.

PAUL : What was it, my darling ?

STELLA : Give me a cigarette.

[*Paul takes the box from his pocket and hands it to Stella.*]

PAUL : We are aware, my dear—stop it ! you're trembling—yes, we are aware——

STELLA : Damn !

[*She throws away the match with which she is attempting to light her cigarette. Robert steps forward and lights it for her as Paul continues to speak :*]

PAUL : ——very much aware of the menace, of the point of deviation. We are eagerly awaiting the shout from another room for we know from whom it will come and to whom it will be directed. Also we are aware of the discovery—the destruction of the village—and so we have nothing to fear. All we have to do is to wait a little while——

[*John Winter comes into the room from below.*]

——but, apparently, not long, Yes, John Winter ?

WINTER : There's a gentleman to see you, sir.

PAUL : The whole world is calling on us to-day. Who is it ?

WINTER : From the village.

PAUL : Ah ! Well ?

WINTER : The Reverend Aldus.

PAUL : The holy book-worm, eh ? Tell him to come up.

[*John Winter turns and shouts down the stairs, " Will you come up, please ? "*]

What does this mean ? If they think I can't attack clerics they should remember my history. Now for it.

[*The Reverend Giles Aldus comes into the room. John Winter goes out.*]

ALDUS : Good afternoon.

[*Paul inclines his head but is silent. The others whisper, " Good afternoon ".*]

My name is Aldus.

PAUL : I am Southman. This is my grand-daughter, Stella—her husband, Charles Heberden and a friend and sympathiser, Mr Robert Procathren.

[*Aldus nods to each in turn.*]

Please sit down.
ALDUS : Thank you.
PAUL : You will notice, my dears, first of all, the general attitude. That of humility bordering on servility. It is dangerous to the unwary. It has been used by the church for hundreds of years to gain advantage in a situation such as this. Next, notice the facial expression. A cursory examination and one might take it to be shyness, perhaps idiocy. It is neither. The clothes—notice the clothes. And the posture—neat, precise. If you were to go near him you would smell not sanctity but intrigue. But don't go near him. I forbid it.

[*There is a pause.*]

ALDUS (*he has a marked impediment in his speech*) : May I speak ?
PAUL : Certainly.
ALDUS : You have finished your attack ?
PAUL : I have not yet begun.
ALDUS : It is evident, Mr. Southman, that I cannot match your fluency in this conversation. I am forced, by my disability, to select only certain words for my use.
PAUL (*he laughs*) : You're doing very well. Carry on.
ALDUS : I have a proposal.
PAUL : Concerning the soldiers ?
ALDUS : Yes. You've heard—— ?
PAUL : Partly. Tell us—in well-selected words—what has happened—and what you propose.

ALDUS : Late last night these three men came to me at the Rectory. I was alone. Their leader——

[*The trumpet sounds from the middle distance.*]

Listen !

PAUL : Yes, we've heard it. Is that the soldiers ?

ALDUS : Yes.

PAUL : Apparently we were mistaken. We thought it was your people fooling about.

ALDUS : No, it is the soldiers. I will tell you. These men came to me—they were honest in that they explained the true position—their escape from criminal detention—it was I who practised dishonesty—and by that I have brought——

PAUL : Get on, man ! There's little time. Certainly no time for self-examination.

ALDUS : Forgive me. Their leader asked one thing of me—shelter for the night. I agreed and told them that they could sleep in the church hall. They went there. They trusted me. In the early hours of the morning I got up and—moved by some sense of justice outside my province—I——

[*He is in tears.*]

PAUL : Come along. What is it ?

ALDUS : I say, forgive me. My mother——

PAUL : Never mind your mother now. Tell us about the soldiers.

ALDUS : I got up and went to the hall and locked them in. I locked the soldiers in.

[*Very sharply and suddenly, but shortly, Paul and Charles laugh.*]

PAUL : What happened then ?

ALDUS : They broke out of the hall just before daylight. One of them had stolen a trumpet from among

some band instruments that were stored there. That is the trumpet you can hear. With that they are advertising their presence. (*He has risen from his chair.*) They are marauding through the countryside. The village is terrorised. They attacked the baker——

PAUL : Why the baker ?

ALDUS : There seems to be no reason for their acts. They are madmen. I do not understand ! I do not understand !

[*He is shouting and stammering incoherently.*]

PAUL : Be quiet ! (——*then, in the silence :*) What do you expect of me ?

ALDUS : Come to—come to ask your help, sir.

PAUL : You've what ?

ALDUS : Come to ask your help, sir.

PAUL : Against the soldiers ?

ALDUS : Yes, sir.

PAUL : I see. How long have you lived in the village, Mr Aldus ?

ALDUS : Five years.

PAUL : Five years. Please sit down. Then you know the situation that exists—has always existed between the village and this house ?

ALDUS : Yes, sir.

PAUL : You do ?

ALDUS : Yes.

PAUL : And yet you come to ask my help ?

ALDUS : I know the history of hatred, sir, and yet I appeal to you in my weakness to help us against these men.

PAUL : You turn in your weakness to me, Mr Aldus ? You surprise me.

ALDUS : Mr Southman !

PAUL : Telephone for the police.

ALDUS : They destroyed the telephone lines last night.

PAUL : Send one of your young men as a runner.
ALDUS : You know we have no young men among us.
PAUL : And I have two.
ALDUS : Yes.
PAUL : And one of them has a car. Have you tried prayer ?
ALDUS : Sir ! Sir, we cannot——
PAUL : Have you tried appeasement ? Offer them——
ALDUS : We cannot——
PAUL : Have you tried preaching ? Appeal to their better natures !

[*Aldus has foundered upon his incoherence. He is silent.*]

And so you have come to me. Why ?
ALDUS : Because, by reputation, you are a great and powerful man.
PAUL : Thank you.
ALDUS : A man——
PAUL : Would you say a good man, Mr. Aldus ? (*Aldus is silent.*) Ah ! then you would use evil to combat evil. A strange presumption for one of your ridiculous uniform.
ALDUS : I cannot engage in polemics with you.
PAUL : Very well. You ask me to lead you against these men to achieve—what ?
ALDUS : To uphold law and order ; to protect the people of my village.
PAUL : Are you not thinking more of your books ? Of the danger to your precious books.
ALDUS : No.
PAUL : Are you sure ? I heard what Robert said—he didn't think I was listening but I heard of all your books about God. Think, Mr. Aldus ! Perhaps you now love the books more than you love God.
ALDUS : No.

PAUL : That would be very wrong, Mr Aldus. Very wrong, indeed.

ALDUS : I am thinking of the villagers—of the people. I am thinking——

PAUL : You are ? I just thought it might not be so. It is for them you want help ?

ALDUS : Yes.

PAUL : Ask me.

ALDUS : What ?

PAUL : To help you.

ALDUS : Help us.

PAUL : Properly.

ALDUS : Will you help us ?

PAUL : No.

ALDUS : There could only——

PAUL : Again !

ALDUS : What ?

PAUL : Ask again.

STELLA : Paul !

PAUL : Shut up ! Ask again.

ALDUS : Will you help us ?

PAUL : No !

[*He has taken up the pistol. He goes to Aldus and taps him on the chest with the barrel of the weapon.*]

No ! I will not help you. I shall form an alliance, however—oh, yes, I shall do that—but it will be with the soldiers and with them I shall revenge myself upon you and your impudent mob. (*He turns away.*) Go ! Leave us ! Will someone show Mr Aldus to the door.

[*Stella moves to Aldus.*]

CHARLES : I'll go with him.

STELLA : No, I'll go. (*She takes Aldus by the arm.*) Will you be able to get back all right ?

[*Aldus nods. They reach the door when Aldus turns.*]

ALDUS : Mr Southman, I will dare to say to you——

[*But Paul, who has been performing a little silent dance, interrupts Aldus by pointing the pistol at him, squinting along the barrel, and saying :*]

PAUL : Bang !

[*Aldus and Stella go out. Paul moves to a position between Robert and Charles. He puts his arms about them.*]

Well, my dear Robert—and my very dear Charles, that pathetic creature has been sent us to represent our enemy. Not very flattering, is it ?

CHARLES (*he is laughing*) : What are you going to do ?

PAUL : Charles, no ! We must be serious. (*Charles is silent.*) We mustn't allow what we've just seen—an awful display of fear, non-comprehension and self-conscious pathos—we mustn't allow that to make us laugh or to make us pity. It is an old trick and we are human. He wanted to tell us about his mother. She is dead—or dying—or doesn't love him any longer—is angry with him, perhaps, for his part in this business —but I wouldn't allow him to speak of it. It might be that there is really some tragedy and I cannot allow ourselves to be diverted by sympathy for such things. No, Charles—even though they had sent us the whole circus instead of the solitary clown we must not be amused or allow our emotions to be touched in any way.

[*He pauses.*]

What am I going to do, you ask ? What am I going to do ?

[*The action becomes centred on Robert Procathren—Paul*

*and Charles towards Robert. The three men move and speak at extreme speed. Paul savagely and in great exaltation: Charles amusedly and lightly, foreseeing towards what they are moving although not the actual event: Robert, through fear, attempting to join in the fantastic jollity as he attempted to join in games and horseplay when a schoolboy.*]

Can you fight, Robert?

ROBERT: Well, sir, I——

PAUL: If you can't——

CHARLES: ——we haven't much time to teach you.

PAUL: No.

ROBERT: A little boxing when I was at school.

[*Paul and Charles laugh with delight.*]

CHARLES: Always the little boys, was it?

PAUL: The boys a little smaller than you——

CHARLES: ——but not too obviously smaller.

PAUL: Poor little bastards! I bet you punished them. No, I meant——

CHARLES: I've been told there are——

PAUL: Shut up, Charles!

CHARLES: I've been told there are rules to that sort of thing.

[*He has jumped upon the table and taken up an attitude of defence.*]

PAUL: Shut up, Charles! No, Robert, I meant——

CHARLES: You mustn't kick, must you?

PAUL: I meant, Robert, fighting. With weapons. Such as this.

[*He holds up the pistol.*]

ROBERT: No. I've had no experience of such things.

PAUL: Never?

ROBERT : Never.
CHARLES : But surely——
PAUL : Could you learn ?
CHARLES : Surely you must have been engaged in some war——
ROBERT : No.
CHARLES : ——at your age.
ROBERT : No. I was not fit.
CHARLES : Morally or physically ?
ROBERT : Both.
CHARLES : You fought with your pen, eh ?
PAUL : Have you never——
CHARLES : Poems of victory !
ROBERT : And defeat.
PAUL : Have you never been moved——
CHARLES : Bravo !
PAUL : ——moved by hate or persecution——
CHARLES : Or love ?
PAUL : ——to contemplate physical violence ?
ROBERT : Never !
CHARLES : It has always been unemotional, calm force——
PAUL : ——in boxing rings——
CHARLES : ——with rules——
PAUL : ——and referees——
CHARLES : ——against harmless little boys.
PAUL : Do you think you could use this ?

[*He holds out the pistol to Robert.*]

ROBERT : I've never handled one before.

[*He takes the pistol from Paul.*]

PAUL : Will you use it——
CHARLES : It is simple !
PAUL : ——with us against the villagers ?

CHARLES : Oh, so very simple !
ROBERT : Yes, I'll use it.
PAUL : Against the villagers ?
ROBERT : Yes.
PAUL : It's loaded.

[*Robert raises the pistol to point at Paul and Charles.*]

CHARLES : Look out !

[*Paul and Charles raise their hands above their heads in mock terror and then shout with laughter.*]

ROBERT (*smiling*) : Sorry.

[*He turns away.*]

PAUL : There's a catch——
CHARLES : There's a catch in everything, Robert.
PAUL : ——at the side of the butt.
CHARLES : Which is the bit you are now holding.
PAUL : You release that catch to fire.
CHARLES : Then slight pressure on the trigger——
PAUL : Face away, dear boy, face away !
CHARLES : That releases the striker which explodes the cap which ignites the powder which, expanding as gas, forces out the bullet——
PAUL : Which brings down the house that Paul built !
CHARLES : Isn't that better——
PAUL : Bang ! Bang !
CHARLES : ——and simpler——
PAUL : Bang !
CHARLES : ——than your boxing with bare fists ?
ROBERT : You must explain the method by which——

[*The pistol goes off in his hand. Paul and Charles shout with laughter again. Robert, dropping the pistol to the floor, stands holding his wrist.*]

O God !

PAUL : Oh dear, no, Robert ! Not that way at all.
CHARLES : No. You must be conscious of when you fire——
PAUL : ——and of the direction in which you fire. Oh yes, you must be much more careful. It is simple, but not as simple as that. The agency is human, not providential. But at least you can fire it—accuracy will come.

[*Charles has taken up the pistol from the floor. He removes the clip of remaining cartridges and holds out the pistol to Robert.*]

CHARLES : There you are. Now you can play with it.
ROBERT : I don't want it ! I don't want it !
PAUL : It's all right, now. Unloaded.
CHARLES : Of course it is.
PAUL : Take hold of it and we'll have a little drill.
ROBERT : I don't want it !
CHARLES : But it's perfectly safe now. Look !

[*He thrusts the pistol into Robert's face and pulls the trigger. The striker clicks : nothing more. Robert, after a pause, takes the pistol from Charles.*]

PAUL : That's right. Now——

[*From almost immediately below the windows, in the garden, there is a great blast blown on a trumpet.*]

Listen ! They're here—the soldiers ! (*He runs to the window.*) Our allies. They're here. They'll know how to use that. (*He is laughing.*)

CHARLES : Can you see them ?

PAUL : No. Perhaps my eyes—I can see nobody. (*He opens the window.*) But they're here. (*He shouts.*) Don't be afraid. Come out—come up here. You're welcome. You're welcome !

CHARLES : Can you see them ?
PAUL : No. There's nobody. Nobody at all.
CHARLES : Shout again.
PAUL : Don't be afraid. We are friends. We are enemies to the village. Come up—come up !

[*The three men listen in silence and into that silence comes the voice of John Winter shouting from the foot of the stairs at the main door.*]

WINTER : Mr Southman—Mr Southman, sir !
PAUL (*shouting*) : We are friends, I assure you. We wish you well. Bless you, I say, bless oh bless you !

[*Again they listen and again John Winter shouts : this time from just beyond the door.*]

WINTER : Mr Southman !
PAUL : What is it ? What does John Winter want ?
CHARLES : I don't know.
WINTER : Mr Southman !
ROBERT : Fools ! You fools ! Don't you understand ? Don't you understand—that is the shout from another room.
PAUL : What ?
ROBERT : The shout from another room—that is it. That ! Have you forgotten ?
CHARLES : Where's Stella ?
PAUL : The shout from another room—— ?
CHARLES : Where's Stella ?
ROBERT : Yes. Where is Stella ?
CHARLES : She went to show Aldus out.
ROBERT : She should be back, shouldn't she ?
CHARLES : Yes.
ROBERT : Well, where is she now ? Where is she now ?
CHARLES : Stella !

[*He runs to the door—for a moment he pauses and then, decided, he begins to open the door. It opens a few inches but that is all : there is some obstruction at the other side.*]

PAUL (*shouting to the soldiers*) : Gentlemen, I assure you that we are your friends. Come up here and let us talk——

CHARLES : Paul—what is wrong ? Why won't the door open ? John Winter !

[*Paul leaves the window and comes back into the room.*]

PAUL : What is it ? What are you doing ?

CHARLES : Why won't the door open ? The door—what is the matter with the door ? Help me !

[*But in the moment's pause when neither Paul nor Robert move Charles has thrown the full weight of his body against the door. The door opens fully and Charles, still within the room, stands looking down at the stairs. He cries out : then again, the second time the sound resolving itself into the name, " Stella ".*]

PAUL : What ? What ?

[*Charles runs from the room on to the stairs. Paul stands plucking at Robert's sleeve.*]

What is it ? What is wrong, Robert ? What has gone wrong ?

[*Robert, motionless, does not answer him. Charles calls from the stairs.*]

CHARLES : Help me ! Help me !

[*Paul goes from the room on to the stairs. Robert, left alone holding the empty pistol, does not move. He does not look towards the door. Paul, looking down at the stairs, backs into the room. Charles and John Winter come in carrying*

*Stella : she is dead. For a time the group is still and silent —then John Winter speaks :*]

WINTER : Put her down, sir.

[*Charles does not move. He stares down into Stella's face.*]

Mr Heberden. Put her down, sir. We must see——
PAUL : Stella. Stella. Stella.
WINTER : Put her down, sir.

[*They lay the body on the floor.*]

PAUL : Robert—Stella's hurt.
WINTER : May I—— ? Mr Heberden, may I look at her ?

[*Charles nods his head. He moves quickly to the door. He finds the bullet-hole.*]

PAUL : Or is it a joke ? They've played jokes on me before.

[*John Winter opens the bodice of Stella's dress exposing her breasts.*]

You wouldn't play jokes on me, Robert. That would be cruel. You wouldn't ridicule me. No, she's playing the joke on me. Stella—Stella, darling, stop it. It's not a very good joke.
WINTER : There is a bullet wound—here.
PAUL : Stella !
WINTER : It has, I think, passed through her heart.
PAUL : What do you say, John Winter ?
WINTER : There is no pulse.
PAUL : John Winter ! You dare to enter into this joke ?
WINTER : She is dead.
CHARLES : Dead.

PAUL : Dead ! You go too far, sir. Leave the room !
CHARLES : John Winter says she is dead. Shot dead.
PAUL : Dead. Dead. The doors are shutting in the empty house. Dead. Dead.
WINTER : Who was it ? I heard the shot.

[*Charles, without turning his head, points to Robert who, with the empty pistol half-raised, has not moved.*]
But why ? Why ?
PAUL : Won't any of you speak to me ? I am at fault, I suppose. Listen—I'll confess. You've frightened me. There—I've admitted it. You've frightened me with your joke. Now speak to me.
WINTER (*to Charles*) : Shall we take her upstairs, sir ?
PAUL : Speak to me.
WINTER (*to Charles*) : Shall we take her upstairs, sir ?
Nothing can be done.
PAUL : Nothing can be done.

[*Charles and John Winter lift Stella's body from the floor. They begin to carry her to the stairs leading to the upper floor.*]

Nothing can be done.

[*Paul follows Charles and John Winter.*]

Don't go, Robert. I'll be down in a minute when I've settled this and then I'll show you how to use the pistol properly. A fine business, indeed.

[*Charles and John Winter are going up the stairs.*]

Wait for me. Where are you taking my darling ? Wait for me !

[*Charles and John Winter, carrying Stella's body between them, have gone up the stairs from the room. From the foot of the iron steps leading from the balcony to the garden comes*

*a piercing human whistle piping a popular tune. It does not disturb* Robert *who remains motionless and Paul has followed Charles and John Winter from the room. There is the sound of heavy boots on the iron steps. On to the balcony and so into the room by the window come three soldiers—Walter Killeen, Henry Chater and their leader, Christian Melrose. Henry Chater carries a trumpet. It is Walter Killeen who is whistling but he stops as they enter the room to stand a little inside the window.* Robert, *unmoving, has his back to them.*]

MELROSE : Good afternoon. I hear we're welcome in this house. That'll be a change.

[*Robert does not move. Melrose raises his voice.*]

Good afternoon.

[*It is when* Robert *turns that Melrose sees the pistol in his hand.*]

A nice welcome. A very nice welcome, indeed ! (*To Chater and Killeen.*) Don't move ! (*To* Robert.) And what are you going to do with that ?

ROBERT : What ?

MELROSE : You have a pistol in your hand.

ROBERT : What do you say ?

MELROSE : Are you deaf ? I said, You have a pistol in your hand.

ROBERT : Oh, yes. It's not loaded—now.

MELROSE : I'm very happy to hear that. Very happy, indeed.

[*He takes the pistol from* Robert, *examines it and puts it on the table.*]

I thought—just for a minute, you know—I thought we weren't welcome here. (*To Killeen and Chater.*)

Come in—sit down—don't fool about and keep quiet. You can sit there and you sit there where I can see you.

[*Killeen and Chater come into the room and sit down. Melrose turns back to Robert.*]

Who are you? What's your name?

ROBERT: Procathren.

MELROSE: What?

ROBERT: Procathren. Robert Procathren.

MELROSE: Robert, is it? I'll call you Bob—or perhaps Bobby would be better. I'm Melrose—1535380, Christian—my name not my faith—this is Killeen and this, Chater. Stand up!

[*Killeen and Chater stand up and perform magnificent mock bows to Robert.*]

That's better. Once upon a time, although you wouldn't think it to look at us, we were soldiers.

ROBERT: Yes, I've heard about you.

MELROSE: Oh, you've heard about us. Then that saves a lot of explaining, doesn't it? About why we're here and——

ROBERT: Yes. You needn't explain.

MELROSE: Thank you very much. But you can explain something to me. Why are you all dressed up?

ROBERT: I was on an errand.

MELROSE: Do you always put on your best clothes to run errands? What's your job?

ROBERT: I'm a poet.

MELROSE: A poet. (*To Killeen and Chater.*) He's a poet.

[*Melrose is about to speak again but Killeen has risen and recites:*]

KILLEEN : " Oh, it was down by the river
That I made her quiver.
Oh, you should have seen her belly
It was shaking like a jelly.
Oh, you should have seen her—— "

MELROSE : That's enough !

[*Killeen sits down.*]

Give us your professional opinion, Bobby. Isn't that lovely poetry ? Well—(*he laughs*)—never mind. Do you live here ?

ROBERT : No.

MELROSE : What are you doing here, then ? You don't look right. You don't——

[*Chater blows softly on the trumpet. Melrose turns on him.*]

Listen ! I've told you about it. I've told you about blowing on it when I'm talking. So shut up or I'll take it away from you. Do you hear ? I'll take it right away from you—so shut it ! (*To Robert.*) Who lives here, then ?

ROBERT : The Southman family.

MELROSE : I see. Who was it called to us from the window ?

ROBERT : Paul—the old man.

MELROSE : What is he ?

ROBERT : A poet.

MELROSE : Birds of a feather, eh ?

ROBERT : No !

MELROSE : Well, don't shout. (*He has taken out a packet of cigarettes.*) Have one ?

ROBERT : No, thank you.

MELROSE : Well, Bobby, I'm afraid we must be getting on.

ROBERT : No, don't go ! Don't go !

MELROSE : What ?
KILLEEN : Hey, Christy !

[*He has been staring at the painting on the wall.*]

MELROSE : Wait a minute. Why don't you want us to go, Bobby ? Come on, tell me—I'm interested. People usually want us to move on as quickly as possible. But you want us to stay. Now, why is that ?
KILLEEN : Hey, Christy !
MELROSE : Well, what is it ?
KILLEEN : Look !

[*He points to the painting.*]

MELROSE : Well, what about it ? It's a painting—done with brushes, you know.
KILLEEN : Hey, but Christy—look, look !
MELROSE : I'm looking.
KILLEEN : What is it ?

[*Melrose and Killeen move to stand before the painting.*]

MELROSE : Well, what's your guess ?
KILLEEN : It's as good as yours. Look !

[*He extends a finger.*]

MELROSE : Don't touch !
KILLEEN : All right.
MELROSE : Well, don't touch. It isn't finished. Look —(*he rubs his fingers into the paint*)—here. It isn't finished.

KILLEEN : There's some paint—let's finish it.
MELROSE : No !

[*They stand silently looking up at the painting. Then Melrose, without turning, asks :*]

Are there any women here ?

[*Robert, unaware that he cannot be seen, shakes his head.*]

I said, Are there any women here ?
ROBERT : There was one.
MELROSE : Oh ?
ROBERT : I killed her.
MELROSE : What ?
ROBERT : I killed her.
MELROSE : Wasn't that rather a silly thing to do ?—when there was only one, I mean.
ROBERT : She was horrible—she was pregnant——
MELROSE : I see.
ROBERT : ——but it was an accident.
MELROSE : Is that why you asked us not to go ?
ROBERT : Yes.

[*There is silence as the three soldier stare at Robert. Then Robert, stretching out his hands before him, seems to be about to fall.*]

ROBERT : What have they made me do ?

[*Melrose goes to him and holds him.*]

MELROSE : Hold up ! Hold up, you're all right. Killeen, get the cure-all.

[*Killeen goes to a small haversack he has been carrying and takes out a bottle of whiskey.*]

Now, come along, Bobby, you're all right.
ROBERT : Oh, what have they made me do ?

[*Melrose takes the whiskey from Killeen.*]

MELROSE : Here—have some of this. Spoils of war.
ROBERT : No.
MELROSE : Oh, don't be an old woman ! Go on.

[*Robert drinks from the bottle.*]

Careful ! You're dribbling it. Better ? Nothing like it, is there ? What are you afraid of, Bobby ?
ROBERT : Of what is going to happen.
MELROSE : We won't let anything happen to you. Will we ?

[*He turns to Chater who, with the trumpet across his knees, is peaceably picking his nose.*]

Happy ?

[*Chater grins.*]

ROBERT : You'll help me ?
MELROSE : Of course.

[*He holds out the bottle of whiskey.*]

Have some more. We've got another bottle.

[*He winks at Killeen and Chater.*]

ROBERT : You will help me ?
MELROSE : I've said, yes. Go on, drink up.
ROBERT : Oh, my dear friend, they have made me do dreadful things. But you will help me ?
MELROSE : Yes.
ROBERT : Thank God for you !
MELROSE : Yes, indeed.
ROBERT : We must plan what we shall do.
MELROSE : Yes, we will—we will.
ROBERT : Then let us go.
MELROSE : You're going to run away ?

ROBERT : No, my friend, I'm going to run towards the event. A thing I have never done before—but now I have the authority. Let us go.
MELROSE : Where to ?
ROBERT : First, the village.
MELROSE : All right.

[*Paul calls from an upper room—" Then nothing can be done ! Nothing ! And it is no joke—no joke ! "*]

ROBERT (*whispers*) : No joke.
MELROSE : The old man ?
ROBERT : Yes.
MELROSE : With the woman ?
ROBERT : Yes.
MELROSE : Should I go up ?
ROBERT : No ! No !
MELROSE : All right.
ROBERT : You can trust me.
MELROSE : I'm sure I can.
ROBERT : It will all be for the best.
MELROSE : I'm sure it will.

[*He looks at Killeen and puts his finger to his forehead. They laugh.*]

ROBERT : Let us go.

[*Melrose picks up the pistol from the table.*]

MELROSE : I'll take this.
ROBERT (*to Chater*) : Sound the trumpet !

[*Chater, standing, raises the trumpet smartly and blows a single sustained note. Robert looks towards the stairs.*]

Ready ?
MELROSE : Ready.

[*Melrose, Chater and Killeen move to the window, out on to*

*the balcony and so down into the garden. Robert is about to follow them and has reached the window when Paul comes down the stairs.*]

PAUL : Robert !
ROBERT : I am here.
PAUL : It's no joke.
ROBERT : Indeed, it is no joke. No joke at all.

[*He is crouched by the window, one arm outstretched to support himself.*]

PAUL : She's dead.
ROBERT : Yes. Quite, quite dead.
PAUL : You killed her.
ROBERT : I did.
PAUL : Why, Robert ?

[*Robert is staring at Paul.*]

ROBERT : Beast-face !
PAUL : Robert !
ROBERT : Beast-face !
PAUL : Robert !
ROBERT : Satisfied ? Satisfied by the shift of responsibility, eh ?
PAUL : Robert !
ROBERT : Shan't step from under it this time. Surprised, eh ?
PAUL : Robert !

[*But Robert has gone, running down the steps to the garden after the soldiers. Paul moves to the window.*]

Robert, come back ! I have forgiven you—I have forgiven you !

[*But Paul can no longer be seen or heard by Robert. Paul turns back into the room.*]

I have forgiven him.

[*Then, alone and old, he is seized by a terrible paroxysm of grief and fear. His eyes are closed : from his mouth comes a thin sound : his hands go up and tear the scarf from his neck. It is as if he would do himself great physical violence but his strength fails him—he can only stand exhausted.*]

*Curtain*

# ACT THREE

*The scene is the same.*

*The time is six hours later : it is night.*

*Charles is working on the mural painting. He has gathered the lamps of the room around him and the light is so concentrated on his work. His model is the body of Stella which lies on an improvised bier on the rostrum before the painting. The body is draped but for the face and head. On the floor, at the foot of the bier, lies a collection of human and animal bones. The painting on the wall is almost complete for Charles has added the figure of Stella as she lies in death. The other figures now look down at her and the dog stands at her head.*

*At the other side of the room about the fireplace and in darkness but for the firelight are five women and a child. Hannah Trewin, Margaret Bant, Edith Tinson and Flora Baldon are old. The other woman, who is young, is Judith Warden—mother of the child who stands at her side. This child, a girl, is ten years of age. She is dressed, fortuitously, as though for some celebration ; although she wears a large pair of boots and a pair of boy's long trousers she also wears a short white embroidered frock of satin. A gay scarf is tied about her head to frame her face and also on her head is a yellow straw hat decorated with tiny artificial flowers. Each of the women in this group carries, wears, or has placed on the floor by her feet some of the surprising objects taken by those flying from a catastrophe. In this case there is a large shining china jug, a gramophone, an oleograph of a scene from " Romeo and Juliet " and various nondescript bundles. Edith Tinson has two pairs of shoes slung round her neck by a length of string. Margaret Bant carries an ornate parasol and is hung about with an excessive amount of cheap jewellery. Hannah Trewin appears to be wearing at least three hats. These things, quite worthless to these people*

*in their present predicament, were snatched up in the last desperate moment.*

*The group is silent and motionless but for the child who bounces a rubber ball against the door.*

*Through the windows the visible expanse of sky is red : the village is burning. It is this fire that John Winter stands by the window to watch.*

*The tolling of church bells can be heard.*

WINTER : It doesn't look as if he'll be able to sound the bells much longer.
CHARLES : Why ?
WINTER : I can see the tower now—very black against the fire—very near—not much longer. . .
CHARLES : The sooner the better—damned noise.

[*The child is restrained by her mother from bouncing the ball.*]

WINTER : What do they hope to gain by ringing the bells ?
CHARLES : Help, I suppose.
WINTER : From God ?
CHARLES : God alone knows !

[*They smile at each other.*]

Where's Paul ?
WINTER : Upstairs, sir. Packing.
CHARLES : Packing ?
WINTER : Packing his bag.
CHARLES : Does he think he's still expected to go ?
WINTER : He seems to have no doubt, sir. I'm afraid he's very ill.
CHARLES : Oh, don't put it like that. Say he's going mad, nuts, bats, potty but not that he's very ill.

WINTER : I'm sorry, sir. I tried to explain that he's no longer expected to go to London to-day and that Procathren may——
CHARLES : What did Procathren say to the old man before he went ? That's what I'd like to know.

[*Paul calls from an upper room :*]

PAUL : The village is burning away. There'll be nothing left as far as I can see—nothing at all.
CHARLES : Why isn't there more light ?
WINTER : Shall I get you candles ?
CHARLES : No ! Don't leave the room. I can see. I can see.

[*John Winter begins to make a rearrangement of the lamps.*]

There's someone out there !
WINTER : Where ?
CHARLES : Out on the balacony.

[*John Winter turns to stare out of the window.*]

WINTER : Yes.

[*He raps on the window and then, opening it, calls :*]

Come along ! Come along in here. It's all right—don't be frightened.
CHARLES : Who is it ?
WINTER (*he laughs*) : Old Cowper, the postman.

[" *Chk-chk-chk-chk-chk !* " *he says, as if calling an animal.*]

Come on. Come on. Come on.

[*Thomas Cowper appears at the window. He is in the uniform of a country postman and carries his mail delivery bag.*]

COWPER : What do you mean ? Chk-chk-chk-chk-chk, indeed. Do you think I'm afraid to come in here ? If so, let me say I'm as good as any that lives in this damned house and what's more I'm here in the course of my duty and you are at the moment impeding that duty. Get out of the way !

[*John Winter steps aside and Cowper marches into the room and goes to Judith Warden, holding out a letter to her.*]

For you, Mrs. Warden, my dear. I've been looking for you all evening—your house has quite gone so I couldn't leave it there. But they told me you'd come this way. It's from your husband, my dear. Well, that's the last one.

[*He takes off his cap and turns to Charles.*]

Now then, young man. Stop that—whatever it is you're doing. I want a few details from you.

CHARLES : Details ?

COWPER : Yes.

[*He has taken a notebook from his pocket and has a pencil ready.*]

CHARLES : What about ?

COWPER : About the disaster, of course.

CHARLES : The fire ?

COWPER : Yes. Now leave that dummy alone for a few minutes, there's a good boy.

CHARLES : In what capacity do you want these details ? As a postman ?

COWPER : As an officer of the law. Police-Constable Pogson is engaged with the fire.

CHARLES : I see.

COWPER : When he heard that I was coming this way he asked me to take any particulars from you.

I should like to say that as a civil official I have never taken either side in the quarrel that has gone on between this family and the villagers. You may speak quite freely to me.

CHARLES: Thank you.

COWPER: Not at all.

CHARLES: But I have nothing to say.

COWPER: Haven't you?

CHARLES: No.

[*There is a pause.*]

COWPER (*to John Winter*): Have you anything to say?

WINTER: No.

COWPER: Oh. (*He puts the notebook and pencil back in his pocket.*) Well, that's all, then. You can carry on with whatever you were doing. (*He speaks to the villagers.*) I don't know what to do with you. I suppose you can stay here to-night. (*He turns to Charles.*) Can they—— ? What are you laughing at?

CHARLES: You.

COWPER: Is it a laughing matter that the village is destroyed, that the people are wandering homeless, and that the Reverend Mr Aldus is trapped at the top of the church tower and is roasting like a potato?

CHARLES: Is that why he's ringing the bells?

COWPER: I can tell you, young man, this terrible accident is no laughing matter.

CHARLES: Accident. Was it an accident?

COWPER: Of course. You don't think anybody would do such a thing on purpose?

CHARLES: They might.

COWPER: Don't be silly. Of course it was an accident. I should know—I was there when it started. Complete accident, it was. Just after six o'clock—I was delivering the last post—I was late, I'll admit it, I was late. A letter had just gone into Mr. Aldus's box and

as I was turning away from the door I saw three soldiers coming to the house. The soldiers—you've heard about them ?—bit of trouble from them to-day —nothing that couldn't have been handled with understanding—old soldier myself—but still—there you are. The soldiers had another man with them—a towny fellow, toffed up like. While they passed I hid in the bushes—didn't want to expose myself to any insults while I was in uniform. Anyway, they went straight into Mr Aldus's house. Just like that —as if they owned it. I could see the four of them talking to Mr Aldus in his drawing-room—I could see it by the light—by the light of the room. It was the dandy fellow who spoke—talked for about twenty minutes he did and then they came away. I was still hiding as they passed me. The big soldier had his arm around the dandy fellow—and the dandy fellow was talking and talking. I was going to wait until they got from sight before I came out to get on with my round. Then Mr Aldus came to the door of his house and he must have seen me because he called out, " Cowper, come here ". By the time I'd got to the house he'd gone inside and so I sounded the knocker. He didn't come to the door again so after a few minutes I went inside. He was in the room with the books and he was carrying armfuls of those books from the shelves and throwing them on the open fire. They were tumbling out from the fireplace into the middle of the room and they were burning, burning away. When I went into the room he stood there for a moment pointing at them and trying to say something but he couldn't get it out—that stutter of his, you know—and he was crying—crying noisily like a baby. I suppose he wanted me to help him—I don't know really. Anyway, then he went back to carrying more books off the shelves and throwing

them on the fire. I was taken aback, I don't mind admitting it. When I'd gathered myself together I ran into the street and began shouting but nobody would come out—they've been hiding from the soldiers all day. I ran through the empty streets but there was no one. When I got back to Mr Aldus's house the place was afire and then I heard the bells—he'd gone into the church and was ringing the bells. The fire spread and nobody would help me—nobody came out—not even P.C. Pogson—until they were forced out by the fire. And now the whole village is destroyed—burned right away.

[*He pauses.*]

I hope you think I acted for the best, sir.

CHARLES : What ? Yes, I'm sure you did.

COWPER : Thank you, sir.

[*He puts on his cap and touches the peak to Charles.*]

But what am I doing ? I oughtn't to be here talking. I must get back. Will you let me out, please ?

[*John Winter opens the window and Thomas Cowper goes out by the way he came. There is a murmuring, a whispering from the four old women, Hannah Trewin, Margaret Bant, Edith Tinson and Flora Baldon.*]

CHARLES : What is it ?

EDITH : } (*together*) { We saw him.
HANNAH : } { We know about the man—

EDITH : You speak, my dear.

HANNAH : No. You speak, my dear.

EDITH : Very well. We saw him.

CHARLES : Who ?

HANNAH : The man with the soldiers.

MARGARET : The man who talked so much.

HANNAH : Yes, we saw him.
EDITH : We saw him spoil his beautiful clothes by walking through the burning street.
MARGARET : The soldiers followed him—they were laughing but he didn't laugh.
EDITH : They came towards us as we ran from the fire.
HANNAH : His white face frightened us.
MARGARET : Yes, it did.
HANNAH : His voice frightened us, too.
MARGARET : Yes.
HANNAH : Long after he'd passed us we could hear it through the sound of the fire.
EDITH : And through the cries of the people.
HANNAH : Even though the bells were ringing.

[*There is a pause.*]

FLORA : He spoke to me.
EDITH : No !
HANNAH : Never !
FLORA : Yes, he did.
CHARLES : What did he say ?

[*She does not answer.*]

Well, what did he say ?
FLORA : I didn't understand him—I didn't understand what he said—but he spoke to me.
CHARLES : Somewhere here there is a link——(*He strikes his forehead.*) Think, John Winter, think !

[*He leaves the painting and moves about the room.*]

What did he say to Paul ? What did he say to the old woman ? Is it contained in that ? I don't know. Perhaps so simple. No, we've missed the moment for discovery. It was when she—(*he points to Flora*

*Baldon*)—said, "He spoke to me". Gone now. Never mind. Doesn't matter.

[*He returns to the painting but, as an afterthought, says :*]

But you, John Winter—would you like to get away ? You've time. I'll look after the old man.

WINTER : I'll stay.

CHARLES : All right.

[*Paul has come down the stairs into the room. He is wearing his cloak and carries a hat, a stick and a small case.*]

PAUL : John Winter tells me you have given sanctuary to some women of the village.

CHARLES : Yes.

PAUL (*to the villagers*) : You are welcome.

[*The church bells stop ringing : there is a single bell, then silence.*]

(*To Charles*) The village is on fire.

CHARLES : Yes.

PAUL : I've been watching the fire from my room.

CHARLES : Have you ?

PAUL : It's burning right up—right up into the sky.

CHARLES : Yes.

PAUL : Who is responsible ?

CHARLES : It was an accident.

PAUL : There is always the responsibility—it must rest with someone.

WINTER : Mr Aldus, sir.

PAUL : I remember him.

WINTER : He was burning his books——

PAUL : What's the time ?

CHARLES : We don't know. The clock has stopped.

PAUL : I must go soon. I'll wait here. (*He sits down.*) Have you got the cigarettes, John Winter ?

WINTER : No, sir. Aren't they in your pocket ?
PAUL : I haven't looked. (*He makes no move to do so.*) I just thought I'd like a cigarette whilst I'm waiting. Have you finished the picture, Charles ?
CHARLES : Not yet.
PAUL : How long will you be ?
CHARLES : I shall work until the last moment.
PAUL : What ?
CHARLES : Nothing. I shan't be long.
WINTER : Do you want a cigarette, Mr Southman ?
PAUL : It doesn't matter, John Winter, it doesn't matter. I just thought it would pass the time until I go.
CHARLES : Paul, my dear, listen to me. You must try to remember. You're not going now. Stella is dead——
PAUL : Poor Stella !
CHARLES : ——yes, poor Stella—and Procathren has run away and so you are not going to London after all.
PAUL : An excellent statement on the situation, sonny. Very good.
CHARLES : Well, you must try to help John Winter and me by remembering these things.
PAUL : I will.
CHARLES : Good. (*He looks down at Stella.*) Why is her face all sunken ? She looks monstrous. Give me that lamp, John Winter.
PAUL : Is it dark out to-night ?
WINTER : There's the fire.
PAUL : Of course, the fire. Good. Go and get the axe, John Winter. Also a saw, spades and some rope —we shall want some rope.
WINTER : What are you going to do ?
PAUL : Cut down those two trees. Those in front of the house. I told you about them.
WINTER : Yes, you told me, but——

PAUL: What did she call them? She had pet names for them. What were they? I've forgotten. Never mind. We'll have them down—down they shall come. It'll give me something to do—something to occupy me whilst I'm waiting. You think I'm not strong enough. Is that what you think?

[*He stands up and strikes John Winter across the face.*]

Am I strong enough? Am I? I think so. Get the tools.

CHARLES: Yes, go along, John Winter.

PAUL: Yes, go along. And remember you're a servant. The rope must be strong.

[*John Winter goes out.*]

CHARLES: You'd be better employed digging a grave.

PAUL: That's a very unkind thing to say, Charles. Very unkind, indeed. She must be buried but surely you can't expect a man of my age to go out at night and dig a grave. You must do it with John Winter. I can't do it. You can't expect me to do it—not at my age.

CHARLES: I meant a grave for the dog.

PAUL: Anyway, she can't be buried until you've finished with her. (*He is staring at Stella.*) Is that blood on her face?

CHARLES: What? No. Paint.

PAUL: Wipe it away.

CHARLES: We mustn't touch her.

PAUL: It disfigures her.

CHARLES: It is the death that disfigures her.

PAUL: She would have been glad to know I still intend to go to-night. It was her wish—she was most insistent.

CHARLES: Listen!

PAUL: I'd want to please her, poor dead thing.

CHARLES : Listen to me !
PAUL : I'm going, Stella, just as you wished. (*He laughs.*) Shame on me ! Talking to the dead.
CHARLES : Listen to me, Paul.
PAUL : Yes, sonny.
CHARLES : You're not going.
PAUL : No ?
CHARLES : Do you hear me ? You're not going.
PAUL : Am I not ?
CHARLES : No. Procathren's run away. The dinner in your honour has all been eaten up and the guests gone home by now. Whilst they chatted and wondered why you were absent—do you remember what you did ?
PAUL : What did I do ?
CHARLES : You wandered about this house, a crazy old man, talking of your hey-day.
PAUL : Did I really ?
CHARLES : Yes. So you can take off your cloak and put away your hat—you are too late now. It is never going to be.
PAUL : How you run on. Get along with your painting, sonny. (*He calls to the child.*) Come here, little girl. Or are you a little boy ? (*The child goes slowly to him.*) And what are you called ?
CHARLES : Damn you, Paul ! God damn you for the beastliness—the selfishness of shutting yourself up in your tower of senility and lunacy at this moment—at this moment !
PAUL : Hush, Charles ! You'll frighten the child.
CHARLES : If only I could take refuge in madness as you have done. If only I could convince myself as you have done that I am an artist, that the world waited to honour me, that the fires out there were a display for a victory, that these brushes I hold were sceptres and these people princes. Then I might

face the future ! You have the belief and the refuge—but it is not for me. I cannot go so far. I am not mad. I am not mad, God help me ! I can touch the reality and know that I am nothing, that the world censures me, that the fires burn without reason, that these brushes are instruments of torture and these people miserable, frightened clods !

PAUL : Charles, I command you to be quiet ! You're frightening this child.

[*Charles stands quite humbled before the child's penetrating stare.*]

Get on with your painting.

CHARLES : Well, try to remember. If you love me, try to remember. Don't pretend.

[*Charles returns to the painting. Paul speaks to the child :*]

PAUL : Don't let him frighten you. He's afraid—always has been. Poor Charles ! Now then—are you going to talk to me for a little while before I go ? What shall we talk about ? You can talk, can't you ? Well, come along, say something to me. Say, " Hullo ". Say my name. Say, " Paul ". No ? Very well, then, you tell me your name. Haven't you a name ? You must have a name. Everyone has a name. Tell it to me for a penny. For twopence, then. Won't you talk to me ? Not even for a little while ? It can only be for a little while because, you see, I'm going away. Look ! I've got my hat—and a stick because I'm very old and a little case packed with all the things I shall need. Perhaps I should be going now or I shall be late. I wonder what the time is ? Ah ! you have a watch. What does it say ? Let me see. But it has no hands on the face—it's no use at all. Pretty, though. Is that why you wear it ? Because it's pretty ? I expect so. We don't have pretty things

here. I'm sorry. I'd like pretty things and children around me again. Darling, there is one thing I must tell you : I have forgiven you—I have forgiven you. I'm not sad—not really. I'm happy—quite happy. O darling, darling Stella, it's a very great day for me this birthday of mine. There you are—there's something for you to say. Say, " Many happy returns of the day ".

[*After a pause the child says with great clarity*, " *Many happy returns of the day* ".]

There ! I knew you could speak. Well done ! " Many happy returns of the day ", you said. And that is what they will say when I arrive—the great and famous people receiving me—they will say——

[*And the little crowd, speaking together, say*, " *Many happy returns of the day* "—*and then, possessed by quite a tiny fever of excitement, they cry out separately*, " *Happy birthday* "—" *God bless you* "—" *Much happiness to you* " *and* " *Good men are rewarded* ". *Paul standing and holding the hand of the child at his side speaks to her :*]

Can you sing ? Can you dance ? Dance for me ! Dance for me in your lovely gay clothes—as a birthday gift. Not much to ask. Don't be shy. Look at me. I'm very old—oh, very old but I can dance and sing.

[*And he does so as the villagers laugh and clap their hands. Christian Melrose has come up the stairs and stands inside the doorway. Paul, turning and looking beyond the child, sees Melrose and stops his singing and dancing : the villagers stop their laughter and clapping.*]

Have you come for me ?

MELROSE : That's right.

PAUL : I'm ready. Look, I'm quite ready.

MELROSE : Were you expecting me ?
PAUL : Oh, yes. (*To the child.*) No more dancing now.

[*Melrose comes fully into the room. The group of women give a short scream in unison and gather even closer together. The child runs to her mother. After Melrose has entered Killeen and Chater come in.*]

MELROSE : How did you know ?
PAUL : I knew.
MELROSE : Who told you I was coming here ?
CHARLES : Don't take any notice of him.
MELROSE : Oh, hullo, over there. And why shouldn't I take any notice of him ?
CHARLES : Because he's mad—lunatic.
MELROSE : Is he ?
CHARLES : Yes.
MELROSE : Well, mad or not, he's got hold of the right end of the stick.
CHARLES : About going away ?
MELROSE (*yawning*) : Yes. God ! I'm tired.
CHARLES : Who are you ?
MELROSE : That doesn't matter.

[*Killeen and Chater are clowning and fighting in the doorway. Melrose turns on them.*]

Stop that ! You're Charles Heberden.
CHARLES : Yes.
MELROSE : And that. That's your late, lamented wife?
CHARLES : Yes.
MELROSE : I see. Where's the servant ?
CHARLES : Downstairs.
MELROSE : Call him.
CHARLES : I refuse.
MELROSE : Oh, all right. (*To Killeen.*) Call him. His name's Winter.

[*Killeen goes to the door and calls down the stairs in a mincing and effeminate way, "Oh, Winter! Winter, come up, please. Your master wants you."*]

What are these?

[*He indicates the crowd of villagers.*]

CHARLES: They're from the village. From the fire. We've given them shelter.
MELROSE: Quite right, too. I'd better not make a mistake. This is Paul Southman, isn't it?
CHARLES: Yes.
MELROSE: I shouldn't think there could be two of him.

[*John Winter comes into the room from below. He is carrying a coil of rope.*]

Ah! Winter?
WINTER: Yes.
MELROSE: Come in. What have you got there?
WINTER: Rope.
MELROSE: I see. Rope.
WINTER: Mr Southman asked for it.
MELROSE: Asked for it, eh? Chater—Chater, wake up! Take that. You know what we want.

[*Chater takes the rope from John Winter and squatting on the floor begins his work.*]

(*To Charles.*) We thought we'd have to look for rope.

[*He calls to John Winter who is about to go from the room.*]

Hey, you! Winter! Stay here. (*And to Paul.*) And you sit down, old man. You're not going yet.
PAUL: Not yet?
MELROSE: No, not for a little while.

[*Paul, hesitant, sits—his hat on his head, and the small bag clutched on his knees.*]

Now, Mr Heberden——

PAUL : May I talk to the child ?

MELROSE : What child ? Yes, if you want to.

[*He calls to the child.*]

Come here, you, and talk to the old man.

[*The child comes forward to stand beside Paul.*]

PAUL : I'm not going yet.

[*Melrose has moved to before the painting on the wall.*]

MELROSE : Your work, Mr Heberden ?

CHARLES : Yes.

PAUL (*to the child*) : Won't you talk to me ?

MELROSE : It's very beautiful. I suppose I can call it that, can I ?

CHARLES : Certainly.

PAUL (*to the child*) : Shall we play a game ?

MELROSE : Very beautiful.

PAUL : Shall we ?

MELROSE : Should be in a church.

CHARLES (*he laughs*) : Thank you.

MELROSE : What does that mean ? Laughing like that.

CHARLES : Nothing.

PAUL : Crocodiles.

[*He has taken his spectacles case from his pocket and, removing the spectacles, begins snapping the case at the child's nose.*]

MELROSE : Is it finished ?

CHARLES : No.

MELROSE : Pity.

CHARLES : Yes.

MELROSE : Because it'll never be finished now, will it ?

CHARLES : I suppose not.

MELROSE : Why not ?

CHARLES : There won't be time, will there ?

MELROSE : That's better—much better ! You're beginning to understand. Now we can talk. (*To Chater.*) How long will you be ?

[*Chater, stopping his work for a moment, holds up his hand with spread fingers.*]

Five minutes ? Right. If you'd rather spend those five minutes on your painting, Mr Heberden——

CHARLES : It doesn't matter.

MELROSE : Sure ? O.K.

CHARLES : I should need more than five minutes.

MELROSE : Sorry. Can't give you longer than that. Bobby Procathren should be here by then. I don't know where he's got to. Sit down, Mr Heberden.

[*Charles and Melrose sit on the edge of the rostrum : the villagers are grouped together : Paul plays with the child : Chater, sitting cross-legged on the floor, the trumpet at his side, is cutting the rope into lengths : Winter and Killeen stand alone.*]

Have a cigarette.

CHARLES : Thank you, I will.

[*They light cigarettes.*]

PAUL : And it comes along—along—along and snap !

MELROSE : And have some of this.

[*He brings out a bottle of whiskey.*]

CHARLES : No, thank you.

MELROSE : No ? Oh, well——

[*He drinks from the bottle throughout the following conversation with Charles.*]

Are you afraid?

CHARLES: Of course.

MELROSE: You're very young to die. How old are you?

CHARLES: Nearly twenty-one.

MELROSE: I'm thirty-three—but I look older, don't I?

CHARLES: Yes.

MELROSE: I do. I know I do. (*He sees Killeen among the villagers.*) Killeen—what are you doing there?

KILLEEN: Nothing! Nothing at all.

MELROSE: Well, come out of it, there's a good boy.

KILLEEN: I wanted to know if they'd got anything to eat.

MELROSE: You can't be hungry. You can't possibly be hungry! You've just had a bloody great meal. (*To Charles.*) I don't know, really. Like animals. (*He laughs.*) Perhaps I shouldn't say that. Your cigarette's gone out. Here—let me light it.

CHARLES: Thank you.

PAUL (*to the child*): I was a real Turtle once.

CHARLES: Why are you going to kill us?

MELROSE: Ssh! Keep your voice down. There's no need to frighten the old boy.

CHARLES: You won't do that now. Why are you—you, especially, of all people—going to kill us?

MELROSE: Don't you think I'm capable?

CHARLES: Certainly. I should think so, anyway.

MELROSE: You do?

CHARLES: Yes.

MELROSE: Good. Bobby doesn't think I am capable. He's dared me to do it. (*He stands up, smiling.*) That's a silly thing to do, isn't it? What does he

think I am ? What does he think I shall feel ? You're nothing to me—neither's the old man. Nobody's anything to me—because there is nobody—hasn't been for years. I care for nothing. They put it right when they said I was an " incorrigible ". Look at me. What do you see ?

CHARLES : A monster.

MELROSE : That's through your eyes—and quite natural. I don't take offence. But Bobby can't see me that way. And why ? Because he's lived in the world where people—well, where they behave. Where they do this and that for this and that reason—and they do this and that for this and that reason because they have a life to live—a life to plan—and they've got to be careful. That's how he's judging me—that's how he judged you. Silly, isn't it ? (*He laughs.*) What am I doing standing up talking like this ? I must look a perfect fool !

[*He sits down again beside Charles.*]

CHARLES : Why should he judge me—or Paul—at all ? The fool !

MELROSE : You shouldn't have done it, you know. You've brought this on yourselves. People like us shouldn't do such things to people like that—people who live away out there with women and music. You've struck him very deep. He's talked to me about it and, my God ! can he talk ? He told me about it, all right. I didn't understand one word in ten about his guilt and the way you've destroyed his innocence—but I understood a little. Poor Bobby !

CHARLES : Why ?

MELROSE : He's afraid. Afraid of—what do they call it out there in the world ?—hell ! it's called by a short, sweet name—I know it as well as my own name—what do they call it ?——

CHARLES : I don't know.

MELROSE : Got it ! They call it " death ". That's what they call it—death. And that's what he's afraid of.

CHARLES : So that's the corruption beneath the splendour : the maggot in the peacock.

MELROSE : He told Aldus—you know, the clergyman down in the village.

CHARLES : Of course. You went to see Aldus.

MELROSE (*he laughs*) : Yes, we saw him. Then he began to burn all his books.

CHARLES : Why ?

MELROSE : What ?

CHARLES : I asked why he began to burn his books.

MELROSE : Because of what Bobby said to him, I suppose—I don't know.

CHARLES : What did he say ?

MELROSE : I've told you—I couldn't understand a blind word. He talked nineteen to the dozen, though. Not only in English but in foreign languages. He took down books and read things out of them. Whatever he said must have been very convincing because he made the padre cry—sat there crying like a baby, he did. I don't wonder. Bobby talked to me—talked until I was drunk with it. I'm so bloody tired as well—we've been on the run for eight days.

[*Melrose sees that the door from below is slowly opening. He calls :*]

Who's there ? Oh, it's you, Bobby. Come in. We've been waiting for you.

[*The door opens fully and Robert Procathren stands there. His clothes are filthy and torn, his face and hands blackened by the fire.*]

Come in.

[*Robert steps into the room.*]

What's the matter? Did you get lost?
ROBERT: I've been sick.
MELROSE: I should say you have. Look, it's all over your coat. Have you eaten too much——
ROBERT: Probably.
MELROSE: ——or is it the exercise? Killeen, have you got a handkerchief? Wipe him down.
KILLEEN: I'm a nursemaid—that's what I am.
MELROSE (*to Charles*): Bit of a change in him, isn't there?

[*Melrose is exultant, excited by Robert's appearance, his degradation.*]

Not so beautiful as he was—as we remember him, eh? (*To Robert.*) Better now?
ROBERT: Yes. All right, now.
MELROSE: Oh, he's lost that beautiful tie. You've lost your tie, Bobby.
KILLEEN: He gave it to me.

[*Killeen is wearing the tie loosely round the neck of his uniform.*]

MELROSE: He gave it to you?
KILLEEN: Yes.
MELROSE: Gave it to you?
KILLEEN: Yes!
MELROSE (*laughing*): All right—I'll believe you.
KILLEEN: Well, it's true.
ROBERT: Yes, I gave it to him—as a token.
MELROSE: It's your business.
ROBERT: Melrose.
MELROSE: Yes?
ROBERT: You're not—not "putting it off", as they say, are you?

MELROSE : No, Bobby, I'm not " putting it off ".
ROBERT : Don't " put it off ", Melrose.

[*Melrose goes to Robert and takes Robert's face in his hands.*]

MELROSE : You think I won't do it, I know. But I'm going to do it.
ROBERT : And what is it you're going to do ? Tell me.
MELROSE : You tell me. Ha ! it's like a kid's game, isn't it ? Who tells who, eh ? No, but seriously, Bobby, you tell me. You're the boss now, you know. You can't get away from it now. If you want to order people like me around you've got to take the responsibility—you've got to. It's always been like that. God knows, I wouldn't have it any other way. But it makes me laugh sometimes. " Melrose, do such-and-such ! " " Yes, sir ! "—and then I look down and see their eyes and their eyes are asking me, " Melrose, you think that decision is right, don't you ? If you think I'm wrong for God's sake don't do it." But I do it whatever I think—if I can be bothered to think. What is it I can do for you, Bobby ?
ROBERT : Kill the old man and the boy for me.
MELROSE : Just for you.

[*There is a pause and then Edith Tinson begins to give short repeated screams.*]

What are you doing there, Killeen ?
KILLEEN : I'm not doing a thing. I'm not near her. It's not me—it's what he said.
MELROSE : Well, shut her up !

[*Killeen goes to the woman and her screams stop. It is then a human voice can be heard humming a polite little tune. It is Chater singing as he works. Now it is apparent what he is doing : from the rope he is constructing two nooses.*]

ROBERT : How long ?
MELROSE : Not long.

[*He grips Robert by the shoulders : his voice is strong and clear but without anger.*]

What have I got to lose in this ? Tell me that. Nothing ! You're a fool to doubt me, Bobby—a fool ! (*Turning, he runs into Killeen.*) Get out of the way !
KILLEEN : Hey !
MELROSE : What ?
KILLEEN : Do you think there's any food in the place ?
MELROSE : For God's sake—— !
KILLEEN : Well, some biscuits or something.
MELROSE : There must be something the matter with you.
KILLEEN : I'm thirsty, too.

[*Robert has moved to stand before Paul. He speaks to him :*]

ROBERT : Southman—Southman, can you hear me ? You're not asleep—you're pretending. Come along, look up. Look up !
MELROSE : Listen ! He's beginning to talk to the old man. Quiet, everyone !
ROBERT : Please let me speak.
MELROSE : Carry on, Bobby. Let anyone try to stop you.
ROBERT : You must look at me, Southman.

[*Paul turns his head. Robert is now crouched beside him and Paul looks into his face without recognition, without comprehension.*]

CHARLES : Leave him alone.
MELROSE (*shouting*) : Quiet !

ROBERT: Southman—I thought the power invested was for good. I believed we were here to do well by each other. It isn't so. We are here—all of us—to die. Nothing more than that. We live for that alone. You've known all along, haven't you? Why didn't you tell me—why did you have to teach me in such a dreadful way? For now——(*He cries out.*) ——I have wasted my inheritance! All these years trying to learn how to live leaving myself such a little time to learn how to die.

[*He turns to speak to the child.*]

Afraid of the dark? But it is more than the dark. It is that which lies beyond, not within, the dark—the fear of the revelation by light. We are told by our fairy-tale books that we should not fear but the darkness is around us and our fear is that the unknown hand is already at the switch. I tell you, do not fear, for there is no light and the way is from darkness to darkness.

[*Paul takes Robert's hand and holds fast to it. Robert again speaks to him:*]

You old rascal! Knowing it is not a question of finding but of losing the pieties, the allegiances, the loves. You should tell. I've been talking to Aldus. Told him I lost faith in God years ago and never felt its passing. But man—oh, take faith in man from me and the meaning becomes clear by the agony we suffer. What a cost it is. Clear—not for all immediately—no, Aldus is out there at the moment chasing his lost God like a rat down a culvert. But for myself —I am well.

[*He moves from Paul.*]

Perhaps I should have understood before coming

here. There are many signs out in the world offering themselves for man's comprehension. The flowers in the sky, the sound of their blossoming too acute for our ears leaving us to hear nothing but the clamour of voices protesting, crying out against the end. "It's not fair!"—as they fasten to the walls of life—and the storm is of their own making—it is the howling appeal for tenderness, for love. Only now I see the thing's played out and compassion—arid as an hour-glass—run through. Such matters need not concern us here in this——(*For a moment he is silent.*)——in this place. For we have our own flowers to give us understanding. (*He points to Stella.*) The rose she wears beneath her heart. There, released, is the flower within us all—the bloom that will leap from the breast or drop from the mouth. It shall be my conceit that a flower is our last passport. Who wears it goes free. Free, Southman!

[*There is a shrill whistle from Chater. He has finished his work and points to two nooses lying coiled on the floor before him. Melrose leaps forward and snatches up the ropes.*]

PAUL: John Winter!
ROBERT: Wait!
MELROSE: Ready!
ROBERT: Wait!
PAUL: Let us go.
MELROSE: Yes, come along, old man.
PAUL: I intend to cut down the trees——
ROBERT: Wait!
PAUL: ——that stand before the house. They are a danger.
MELROSE: Quite right.
PAUL: You'll help me?
MELROSE: Yes.
PAUL: Are the tools there, John Winter?

MELROSE : Let him believe it. Come on, let him believe it !
WINTER : The tools are at the door, sir.
PAUL : I see you have the rope.
MELROSE : Yes, I have the rope.
PAUL : Good.
MELROSE : Killeen, take Mr Southman down.
ROBERT : Wait, Melrose, wait !
MELROSE : What for ? We are ready.
ROBERT : I wish to speak.
MELROSE : There's nothing more to say.
ROBERT : Yes !
MELROSE : Killeen, take Mr Southman down.
KILLEEN : Right-o.
PAUL : Thank you.

[*Paul and Killeen go out and down the stairs.*]

MELROSE : Chater, bring Mr Heberden.

[*Chater takes Charles's arm.*]

Oh, by the way, you're not a religious man or anything ?
CHARLES : No.
MELROSE : What I mean is, do you want to say goodbye to your wife ?
CHARLES : No.
MELROSE : Go along then.

[*Chater and Charles go out and down the stairs.*]

What are you going to do, Winter ?
WINTER : I don't know.
MELROSE : Any ideas ?
WINTER : Go away, I suppose.

MELROSE : Have you anywhere to go ?
WINTER : No.

[*Melrose takes some bank-notes from his pocket. He separates several and holds them out to John Winter.*]

MELROSE : Here, take this.
WINTER : Oh, thank you, sir. Thank you.
MELROSE : That's all right.

[*John Winter takes the money and hurries away by the stairs to the upper part of the house. Robert moves to Stella's body and stands looking down at her. There is silence. Suddenly, Melrose speaks :*]

MELROSE : Ready ?
ROBERT (*immediately*) : Ready.

[*Melrose and Robert go out and down the stairs. When they have gone there is a pause and then the child, detaching herself from the group of villagers, moves across the room to where Stella's body lies. The child stares from above at the dead face and, extending a finger, touches for a moment the closed eyes. It is then the mother calls to the child :*]

JUDITH : Stella !

[*Startled by the call the child stumbles among the bones and so moves from the body. In doing so she accidentally knocks against the table and cries out in pain.*]

Stella, dear child !

[*But the child moves on and seeing the green scarf, Charles's present to Paul, lying on the floor, she picks it up and puts it around her neck.*]

Stella ! We are strangers here, Stella.

[*The child takes up the copy of* Alice in Wonderland *from the table. The trumpet suddenly sounds from the garden : a raucous tune. The child, with the book in her hand, performs a grave dance to the music. As abruptly as it began the trumpet stops. The child's dance continues for a little but she hesitates, listening. There is no sound. Dropping the book to the floor she runs to her mother and hides her face in the woman's lap. There is no sound and everything is still : quite still.*]

*Curtain*

# THE PRODIGIOUS SNOB

*Translated and adapted*

*from*

*MOLIÈRE'S*

*Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme*

*by*

*MILES MALLESON*

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*The Prodigious Snob* was presented at the Theatre Royal, Bristol, on September 25, 1951, by the Arts Council of Great Britain and the Old Vic Trust, Ltd., with the following cast:

| | |
|---|---|
| A COMPOSER | *David Edwards* |
| A MUSIC MASTER | *Christopher Burgess* |
| A DANCING MASTER | *William Eedle* |
| TWO SINGERS | *Jane Chapman*<br>*Phyllida Law* |
| TWO FLUNKEYS | *Julian Slade*<br>*Frederick Beale* |
| M. JOURDAIN | *Miles Malleson* |
| A FENCING MASTER | *Michael Aldridge* |
| A PHILOSOPHER | *Newton Blick* |
| A TAILOR | *Roland Bryant* |
| HIS ASSISTANT | *Bob Harris* |
| MADAME JOURDAIN | *Elaine Wodson* |
| NICOLE | *Sheila Burrell* |
| DORANTE | *Michael Aldridge* |
| CLÉONTE | *John Neville* |
| COVIELLE | *Laurence Payne* |
| LUCILLE | *Prunella Scales* |
| DORIMENE | *Pamela Alan* |
| A COOK | *Newton Blick* |
| HIS ASSISTANT | *Jane Chapman* |
| THE MUFTI | *Newton Blick* |
| TURKS, DANCING GIRLS, etc. | *William Eedle, Julian Slade, Frederick Beale, Bob Harris, David Edwards, Christopher Burgess, Jane Chapman, Phyllida Law, Roland Bryant, Anne Salisbury* |

The play produced by Denis Carey
Settings and costumes designed by Hutchinson Scott
Special music composed by John Hotchkis

# CHARACTERS

A COMPOSER
A MUSIC MASTER
A DANCING MASTER
TWO SINGERS
TWO FLUNKEYS
M. JOURDAIN
A FENCING MASTER
A PHILOSOPHER
A TAILOR
HIS ASSISTANT
MADAME JOURDAIN
NICOLE, *a maid*
DORANTE, *a Count*
CLÉONTE, *in love with Lucille*
COVIELLE, *servant to Cleonte*
LUCILLE, *daughter of M. Jourdain*
DORIMENE, *a Marchioness*
A COOK
HIS ASSISTANT
THE MUFTI
TURKS, DANCING GIRLS, etc.

# ACT ONE

*A Room in Monsieur Jourdain's House, Paris : 1670. A Young Composer is composing. He is at a spinet, with a large sheet of music manuscript before him. He is in the very throes of composition—in the agonies and ecstasies of creation. . . .*

*In the room with him are a Music Master, a Dancing Master and a Lady Singer. They are watching him intently, hanging on his every sound and gesture, sharing his birth pangs. . . .*

*The Young Composer is stuck, in the very final passage of his composition . . . he has a possible idea. . . .*

COMPOSER : Ah ? !
REST OF THEM : Ah ? !

[*With much scratching of a great quill pen he sets down a bar of music . . . but it's no good.*]

COMPOSER : Oh, No, No, No ! ! !
MUSIC M. : No, No, No !
DANCING M. : No, No, No !
LADY SINGER : No !

[*With a groan of despair the Young Composer scratches it out again . . . and has another idea.*]

COMPOSER : Aaaah !
REST OF THEM : Aaaah !

[*The Composer scratches away with his quill, at a great pace, beginning to sing as he does so, and ends with a triumphant flourish.*]

COMPOSER : Done ! Finished ! Completed !
MUSIC M. : Completed !
DANCING M. : Finished !
LADY SINGER : Done !

MUSIC M. : Quick, quick, quick—let me see, give it me, let me look—— (*he runs and seizes the manuscript from the exhausted young man, and as he reads it exclaims in ecstatic appreciation*)—Exquisite ! Entrancing ! Delicious ! Oh, oh, oh, heavenly little wisps of sound, caught and captured in this frail web of notes. . . .

DANCING M. : Let's hear, let's hear !

MUSIC M. (*continuing*) : Within these bars, immortal songs, imprisoned !

DANCING M. : Then set them free for us, set them free.

MUSIC M. (*coming suddenly down to earth; very matter-of-fact*) : All in good time. As soon as our worthy friend and patron, the good Monsieur Jourdain, deigns to wake himself up, and remember that we're all here—waiting for him.

DANCING M. : Monsieur Jourdain !

COMPOSER : Monsieur Jourdain !

LADY SINGER : Monsieur Jourdain !

[*And they all break into laughter.*]

MUSIC M. : That's enough ! That'll do ! You forget yourselves ! You may laugh ; you may mock—but as for our Monsieur Jourdain, tell me this : where should we be without him ? (*Confidentially, to the Dancing Master.*) No, my old friend. Let's be frank with one another. We've never been so well off in all our lives. It would be a great thing for us—for your dancing and my music—if the whole world were made up of Monsieur Jourdains.

DANCING M. : God forbid ! God forbid ! I admit I've never been so well off. But that's not the All of life ! I do so *crave* for a little appreciation. I hunger, and I thirst, for the appreciation of Good Taste.

MUSIC M. : What's this ? What's this ? What nonsense are you talking ? Monsieur Jourdain is full of appreciation——

DANCING M. : Eh ? !

MUSIC M. : ——of all the wrong things !

[*And they laugh together.*]

He has a great deal of Taste——

DANCING M. : What ? !

MUSIC M. : ——and all bad !

[*Again they laugh.*]

MUSIC M. : And, he has Money——

DANCING M. (*agreeing*) : Money !——

MUSIC M. : And, he pays us——

DANCING M. (*agreeing*) : Pays us !——

MUSIC M. : Whatever we ask !

DANCING M. (*agreeing*) : Whatever we ask !

MUSIC M. : And, my dear fellow, do you know, I'm beginning to realise more and more the value of my work ! I find myself asking more and more for it every day ! His money ! What more valuable appreciation can he give us ! And the *sound* of the Gold Pieces, as they clink and jingle from *his* purse into *mine*. . . . What applause ! What rapturous applause—— (*they laugh together*). You can have all the hand-clapping in the world—— (*they laugh more together*).

COMPOSER (*warning them*) : Here he comes !

[*Monsieur Jourdain sweeps on. He is wearing an almost incredibly flamboyant dressing-gown, and is followed by Two Flunkeys, uniformed as fantastically. Jourdain is in high spirits.*]

JOURDAIN (*speaking as he appears*) : I'm sorry, I'm sorry, I'm sorry ; sorry, Master Dancing Master (*this*

*to the Music Master*); sorry, Master Music Master (*to the Dancing Master. He realises his mistake*). Oh no! Sorry again, you're the wrong one! You dance—you sing. Got you all muddled. No matter, no matter. I've been putting on my new stockings. Yes, I've been putting 'em on for the last hour. At one time I thought I'd be dead and buried before I got 'em on; and now they're on, as far as I can see, they're on for good! (*He catches sight of the Composer and the Singer.*) Hullo! I don't know who you are, but I'm sorry to keep you waiting.

MUSIC M. (*obsequious*): No need to be sorry——

DANCING M.: To wait for you, Monsieur, is in itself a pleasure.

JOURDAIN: Then you can wait a bit longer. My Tailor's bringing my new suit. I'm to be dressed from head to foot as a Man of Quality. I want you to see me as a Man of Quality.

DANCING M.: A sight worth waiting for!

JOURDAIN (*very suddenly, to the Dancing Master*): What d'you think of my dressing-gown?

DANCING M. (*at a loss for an answer*): Well, I . . . I must say . . . er. . . .

MUSIC M. (*to the rescue*): Overwhelming!

DANCING M. (*gratefully*): The very word—overwhelming. Quite overwhelming.

JOURDAIN: Yes. My Tailor tells me the best people wear them when they first get up. (*He gives a sudden, loud, utterly unexpected yell.*) Flunkey!!

FIRST FLUNKEY: Monsieur?!

SECOND FLUNKEY: Monsieur wants something?

JOURDAIN: No, no, nothing—I just wanted to see if you'd answer! . . . (*to the Dancing Master.*) What d'you think of their liveries?

DANCING M. (*at a loss for an answer*): Well. . . . I must say . . . I. . . .

MUSIC M. (*to the rescue*) : Nature, in her wildest moods —designing flowers, birds or insects—never imagined anything half so—unnatural.

DANCING M. (*gratefully*) : I couldn't have expressed it better.

JOURDAIN : Flunkey !

FIRST FLUNKEY : Monsieur ?

JOURDAIN : Take my dressing-gown off. (*The Flunkey does so, and stands holding it.*) *No. You* took it off. *You* hold it. (*And he takes the dressing-gown and gives it to the other Flunkey. He is now in a very tight pair of breeches and a white shirt. He displays himself.*) How d'you like it ? For my exercises in the morning.

MUSIC M. : Such elegance !

DANCING M. : Such ease !

JOURDAIN : As a matter of fact, it's damned uncomfortable ; and as for doing my exercises, I can hardly breathe. But he's a good Tailor, so I suppose he knows best. (*He sits himself down in a chair.*) Now, how about this little bit of nonsense you're getting ready for me ?

MUSIC M. : I beg your pardon ?

JOURDAIN : Didn't you want me to listen to a new tune ?

MUSIC M. : Oh yes, of course, of course . . . the Aria.

JOURDAIN : The what ?

MUSIC M. : Aria.

JOURDAIN : I never ordered a. . . . I ordered a tune.

MUSIC M. : But, my dear Monsieur, an Aria is, as you might say, in a kind of way—a tune.

JOURDAIN : Eh ? What's this ? D'you mean to tell me that People of Quality call a tune a . . . a. . . .

MUSIC M. : An Aria. Yes.

JOURDAIN : Oh well, let's have the . . . the . . . what-you-said, and to hell with the tune !

MUSIC M. : May I present the young Composer who has just composed it for you.

JOURDAIN : Just composed it ?

MUSIC M. : Yes.

JOURDAIN : Just this minute ? !

MUSIC M. : Yes.

JOURDAIN : Here, on that spot ? !

MUSIC M. : On that spot.

JOURDAIN : While I was putting on my stockings ! That's remarkable. Very remarkable.

MUSIC M. : A remarkable young man. One of my pupils, Monsieur, of outstanding merit.

JOURDAIN : What's this ? A pupil ? But this won't do, Master Music Master ! This won't do at all ! I paid you enough money for you to do the job yourself.

MUSIC M. : But, Monsieur, you misunderstand.

JOURDAIN : Oh no, I don't ! I understand well enough ! When I pay good money, I want the best. Pupil indeed ! You shall only have half what we arranged.

MUSIC M. (*completely deflated*) : But, dear Monsieur——

JOURDAIN : Half !

DANCING M. : But, Monsieur, People of Quality——

JOURDAIN (*falling for the phrase, and turning to the Dancing Master*) : What's that ?

DANCING M. : People of real Distinction and Quality realise that a pupil can far outshine his Master.

DANCING M. : Why, most of the Nobility—indeed, all the Nobler of the Nobility—would gladly pay *double* for the work of this pupil.

JOURDAIN : Double ? !

MUSIC M. : Double. But don't let that trouble you, Monsieur Jourdain. Don't give it another thought. I take no account of money. And, in any case, we can

adjust the difference over the next piece of work. . . . Now you shall hear it, sung from the manuscript.
JOURDAIN : The what ?
MUSIC M. : The manuscript. And the ink scarce dry.

[*He takes the manuscript from the Singer, who has been studying it, and hands it to Jourdain, who takes it and looks at it.*]

JOURDAIN : He's made an awful mess of it ! What are all these black blobs ?
MUSIC M. : The notes.
JOURDAIN : And this writing ?
MUSIC M. : The words.
JOURDAIN : Oh well, let's hope it sounds better than it looks. Go ahead. (*He returns the manuscript and sits.*)

[*The Composer and the Singer arrange themselves at the spinet, and begin the song . . . after a few bars of the music:*]

Wait a moment ! Give me my dressing-gown. I can hear better with it on. (*The Flunkeys help him into his dressing-gown.*) Start again. (*They do . . . but Jourdain interrupts again.*) No. Sorry. Better without it. Take it. (*One Flunkey gets him out of it, the other holds it.*) Right ! Start again. (*They do . . . without stopping them, Jourdain begins to make violent signs to his Flunkeys and addresses them in loud, breathy whispers.*) I tell you what : put it round my shoulders. No, not like that. Oh, you are clumsy ! That's better. . . . Hullo, what have you stopped for ? (*The Composer has stopped playing, so the Singer too has broken off.*) Well, get on with it ; get on with it ! Don't start from the beginning ; I've heard that bit. Start from where you left off.

[*The Singer sings the song, accompanied by Young Composer.*]

To languish so, both night and day,
Without the least respite;
To feel the pangs of ardent love,
Its sorrows, its delight;
If I, a friend, must suffer so,
Bound captive by your eyes,
Oh, sad indeed must be the plight
Of those your enemies.

JOURDAIN: Bit on the depressing side, isn't it?
MUSIC M.: But how exquisitely the music expresses the words.
JOURDAIN: Do they come first? Fancy that! I knew a song once. Much jollier than this. It was about a hare.
MUSIC M.: A hare?!
JOURDAIN: Yes, one of those quick rabbits. How did it go?
MUSIC M.: I'm sure I don't know.
JOURDAIN (*singing*):

I thought my little sweetheart
As kind as she was fair.
I thought my little sweetheart
As harmless as a hare.
But wilder, far, a hundred times,
Yes, fiercer, she, a thousand times,
Than any savage tiger,
That in the forest roams.

Pretty, isn't it?
MUSIC M.: Incomparable.
JOURDAIN: What's that mean?
MUSIC M.: Er. . . .
DANCING M. (*to the rescue*): He means he never heard anything like it.
JOURDAIN: And I never learnt to sing.

MUSIC M. : But you should. To learn to sing is as necessary as to learn to——
DANCING M. : ——to dance.
JOURDAIN : Do People of Quality learn to dance and sing ?
DANCING M. : Why, yes.
MUSIC M. : But of course.
JOURDAIN : Then I will ; if I can find the time—but my Fencing Master's coming at any moment ; and I've engaged a Teacher of Philosophy.
MUSIC M. : Well, of course, Fencing and Philosophy——
DANCING M. : They're all very well——
MUSIC M. : ——but Music——
DANCING M. : ——and Dancing——
MUSIC M. : ——together——
DANCING M. : ——together——
MUSIC M. : ——teach a man everything he wants to know.
JOURDAIN : Everything ?
DANCING M. : Everything.
JOURDAIN : I don't see how you make that out.
MUSIC M. : But, Monsieur, the very Nation is in peril unless all its citizens have a good ear for music.
DANCING M. : Civilisation itself is precarious unless all the peoples know how to dance.
JOURDAIN : Oh, come, come ! Now, now, now ! I've a lot to learn, I know that—a great deal ; but I find that hard to swallow.
MUSIC M. : But Monsieur, are not all our Misfortunes, our Sufferings, all the tragedies of History—even that greatest scourge of Mankind, War itself—due to a lack of harmony among us ?
JOURDAIN : Yes, that's true enough.
MUSIC M. : But a knowledge of Music, Monsieur, can resolve the discords, can harmonise conflict into

co-operation ; and bring us to the ineffable full-close of Universal Peace.

DANCING M. : And when Disaster overtakes us—perhaps in our own lives, perhaps in the life of our country—do we not always say : " That was due to a false step " ?

JOURDAIN : That's true.

DANCING M. : And how is a false step conceivable, if one knows how to dance ?

JOURDAIN : Of course, of course—you know, I can't be such a fool. I understand all that. It's as plain as a pike-staff.

MUSIC M. : Then you'll take the full curriculum of Music——

DANCING M. : And the complete schedule of Dancing——

MUSIC M. : Yes ?

JOURDAIN : Yes.

DANCING M. : Yes ?

JOURDAIN : Yes.

MUSIC M. } (*together, as they shake congratulatory*
DANCING M. } *hands behind Jourdain's back*) : Yes ! !

[*The Young Composer begins to show signs of impatience. To cover this, the Dancing Master speaks at once.*]

DANCING M. : And now, if you please, Monsieur, without waiting a moment, your first lesson—the Minuet.

JOURDAIN : Oh, but I can do a Minuet almost as well as I can sing !

DANCING M. : Then show me, show me. (*To the Composer.*) A Minuet if you please ! Your hand, Monsieur, your hand. (*The Music Master has persuaded the Composer, who plays a Minuet. . . . Jourdain does some minuet steps.*)

DANCING M. (*as Jourdain dances*) : La La La. . . .

Follow me. . . . Keep time. . . . La La La . . . point the toes. . . . La La La.

JOURDAIN (*breaking off*): That's enough of that. I've just thought of something——

COMPOSER (*rising from the spinet*): God forgive him! (*To the Singer.*) Let's escape into some haven of decency! (*He makes his way from the room; followed by the Singer.*)

JOURDAIN: What's the matter with *him*?

MUSIC M.: I've no idea. He may have thought of another Aria!

DANCING M.: Monsieur had thought of something?

JOURDAIN: Eh? . . . Oh yes; yes—— I want you to teach me to bow to a Marchionness—— A Marchioness called Dorimene.

DANCING M.: I take it you wish to show considerable respect?

JOURDAIN: Considerable! I want to show her there's no kind of respect I'm not showing.

DANCING M.: Then you must bow once—so . . . retiring from the lady as you do so. (*He illustrates this.*) Leaving enough space between yourself and the lady, so that you can then advance towards her, bowing three times as you do. (*Again he illustrates, advancing and bowing twice.*) Each bow must be deeper than the last, until, at the final bow, you should be almost touching the lady, your head on a level with her knee. (*He illustrates this.*)

JOURDAIN: Let me try. (*He makes a bow.*)

DANCING M.: That's right. Now move backwards. (*Jourdain does.*) Further! Further back! You must be very careful there's enough space between you for the advance and the three bows—that's all-important. Now! (*Jourdain advances and does the first bow.*) Good . . . now the second bow . . . lower . . . (*Jourdain does.*) Good . . . now advance again till you almost

touch the lady . . . then bow again—lower . . . lower . . . lower . . . (*And just as Jourdain is bent more than double, the First Flunkey appears, announcing in a loud voice.*)

FIRST FLUNKEY: The Fencing Master!

[*A terrific fellow strides on.*]

SECOND FLUNKEY (*entering and announcing*): The Fencing Master's Assistant!

[*A very Small Boy comes in, carrying the foils and other fencing paraphernalia. Poor Jourdain is still bent double, unable to straighten himself again; the Boy runs at him and thrusts a foil into his hand, bent like a hairpin though he is.*]

FENCING M. (*hardly pausing for breath*): And now, Monsieur Jourdain, *if* you please. No time to spare. I have five more lessons to give this afternoon, and ten this evening. On Guard!

[*And Monsieur Jourdain is jabbed in the backside with a foil, which straightens him with a jerk; and before he knows where he is, he is shoved, pushed, prodded and poked into some semblance of the correct fencing position and attitude, the fierce Fencing Master pouring on him, all the while, a stream of instruction, as merciless and quick as the thrusts of his own foil.*]

Now, Monsieur, the Salute!
Stomach in!
The weight on the left leg!
The legs not so far apart!
The feet in a straight line!
Hand on a level with the hip!
Point of the foil in line with the shoulders!
The arm not so stiff!
Left hand level with the eye!

Left shoulder further round !
Head up !
Eyes fixed on mine !
Ad-vance ! Advance ! Stomach in !
Now thrust in Quart.
Now lunge . . . one, two . . . leap back !
Once again.
The foot firm . . . one, two, again a leap backwards !
When you lunge, Monsieur, your blade must come first—and hold the stomach in !
One, two . . . smartly !
Now Advance. . . . Pierce !
Now lunge !
Advance, advance !
Stomach in !
Advance, advance !
One, two !
Move back !
Attack !
One, two !
Again leap backwards !
On Guard, Monsieur !
Parry, Parry, Parry !

[*And at each "Parry" Jourdain gets a dig in the stomach or ribs, emitting various grunts, squeaks and squeals.*]

So. So. So.
Rest !

[*And poor Jourdain collapses exhausted.*]

You see, Monsieur, the whole Art of Fencing lies in being able to give, and not receive ; to strike, and not be struck.

JOURDAIN : So that a man who's not really very

brave—not overflowing with courage, as you might say—might be able to hit somebody without any risk of being hit back ?

FENCING M. : Which sums up, in a nutshell, why the Art of Fencing is so much greater than any of the other Arts. Especially the so-called Arts of Dance and Music.

MUSIC M. : Eh ! ?

DANCING M. : What's this ! ?

MUSIC M. : Be a little more careful, my good fellow —if you please—how you talk of Music.

DANCING M. : And speak of Dancing—if you don't mind—with at least a glimmering of insight.

FENCING M. : Can I believe my ears ? Are you two clowns comparing yourselves and your work to me and mine ?

MUSIC M. : Never !

DANCING M. : God forbid !

MUSIC M. : Music reaches to the sky !—Does a Mountain compare itself to a Molehill ?

DANCING M. : Dancing flows on for ever !—Does a River measure itself against a Puddle ?

FENCING M. (*flourishing his foil*) : Heaven have mercy on 'em, I'll kill 'em both !

JOURDAIN : Gentlemen, gentlemen, are you mad ? Quarrelling with a man who can hit you and you can't hit him back. . . .

MUSIC M. : The Braggart !

DANCING M. : The blustering, boastful, bullying butcher !

FENCING M. (*advancing on the Dancing Master*) : You little cock-sparrow.

DANCING M. : You great Turkey-cock !

[*With a roar of rage the Fencing Master runs at the Dancing Master and aims a great blow at him with his foil,*

*using it as if it were a stick to beat him with ; but with incredible agility the Dancing Master hops out of the way.*]

FENCING M. : Grasshopper !
DANCING M. : Clodhopper !
FENCING M. (*with another howl of rage*) : Aaaah ! Take that !

[*And again he rushes at the Dancing Master and aims a terrific blow which again the Dancing Master eludes.*]

DANCING M. (*skipping round him, and giving him a deft kick in the pants*) : Take that—in tierce ! And that—in carte !
FENCING M. : I'll tear him limb from limb ; limb from limb !
FIRST FLUNKEY (*entering and announcing*) : A Learned Master——
SECOND FLUNKEY : ——of Philosophy !
JOURDAIN (*running at him*) : Oh, Master Philosopher, Master Philosopher ! Come quick ! Quick, quick, quick, Out with your philosophy, calm these gentlemen !
PHILOSOPHER : Gentlemen ! Gentlemen ! Sirs ! Good People ! ! Friends ! ! ! Fie, fie, fie ! ! What unseemliness ! What a sad lack of human dignity ! (*He exudes an immense aura of Philosophic Calm.*) Dear, dear, dear ; really, really, really ! Haven't you read Seneca's great Treatise upon Anger—that base passion that makes beasts of men ?
DANCING M. : That's all very well——
MUSIC M. : ——he dared compare my music——
DANCING M. : ——and my dancing——
MUSIC M. : ——with his coarse pastime of Sword-play.
FENCING M. : Coarse pastime ! This low pedlar of sound ! This hopping, skipping, jig-maker !

DANCING M. : Jig-maker !
MUSIC M. : Pedlar of sound !
PHILOSOPHER : Tut, tut, tut ! And again, Tut ! Why fall out among yourselves upon such trifles ?
DANCING M. : Trifles ?
MUSIC M. : Trifles ? ?
FENCING M. : Trifles ? ? ?
PHILOSOPHER : *Trifles !* Is there so much difference between you ?
DANCING M. : Difference !——
MUSIC M. : Difference ! !——
FENCING M. : Difference ! ! !——
PHILOSOPHER : In your own eyes, yes. But I tell you —in the Discerning Eye of the All-seeing Absolute, you are all Much of a Muchness ! And I tell you more—none but the Stunted envy the Overgrown ; none but the Overgrown look down upon the Stunted. Great Wisdom and Great Virtue, alone, give one man stature above another ; and that man, in his wisdom and his virtue, is unaware of it——
MUSIC M. : But what's all your Wisdom and Virtue worth—unless you can sing it ?
DANCING M. : Or express it with your arms and legs ?
FENCING M. : Show me the Philosophy, or the Philosopher, that can't be laid low in the dust with one swift thrust of my rapier.
PHILOSOPHER : What's this ? ! What's this ? ! You're three very impudent fellows ! My gorge rises ! I don't know whenever before I've met with such shamelessness.

[*The Fencing Master gives a short surprised snort of indignation ; the Dancing Master a squeal ; the Music Master a bellow. The Philosopher turns on them individually.*]

You low, common, ballad-monger! You prancing mountebank! You senseless gladiator!

FENCING M.: Insufferable Pedant!

DANCING M.: Pedagogue!

MUSIC M.: Bookworm!

PHILOSOPHER: This is beyond endurance!

[*And in a paroxysm of ungovernable rage, he rushes at the Music Master, and gives him a box on the ears.*]

That's for you!

[*And at the Dancing Master and slaps his face.*]

And you!

[*And at the Fencing Master and hits him in the stomach.*]

And you!

[*The Three gather round him and begin belabouring him.*]

MUSIC M.: Take that!

DANCING M.: And that!

FENCING M.: And that!

JOURDAIN: Oh, heaven help us! What's to do now? What's to do? Flunkeys! Flunkeys!

[*The Two Flunkeys appear.*]

(*With a gesture towards the struggling mass.*) Take 'em away!! . . . Leave the Philosopher!!

[*The First Flunkey pulls the Music Master off the Philosopher; the Second Flunkey pulls off the Dancing Master; and the Little Boy pulls off his Fencing Master; all three are bundled out of the room, and the Philosopher left a huddled mess. Jourdain runs to him.*]

JOURDAIN: Oh, Master Philosopher, Master Philosopher, I'm so sorry. What a misfortune! I'm

afraid you got a very bad beating. A terrible thrashing!

PHILOSOPHER (*straightening himself and his clothes, quite unperturbed*): Oh, no matter, no matter! That's nothing to worry about. A Philosopher thinks nothing of a little thing like that. I'll write a satire against them after the manner of Juvenal. Now, if you please, what do you wish to learn?

JOURDAIN: Everything. I have a sudden indescribable urge to be wise.

PHILOSOPHER: Well said, well said; excellently well spoken. *Nam sine doctrina vita est quasi mortis imago.* You understand Latin, of course?

JOURDAIN: Oh, yes, of course. Pr it—just for fun—let's pretend that I don't, so that you can tell me what it means.

PHILOSOPHER: *Nam sine doctrina*, and so on?

JOURDAIN: Yes. Now what would you say that means?

PHILOSOPHER: Well, simply . . . "for, without knowledge, life is but a reflection of death."

JOURDAIN: Oh, dear, dear, dear. I don't want to be *that*, do I? A reflection of death! God forgive me! But it is true, you know. It's got something, this Latin——

PHILOSOPHER: Would you like to learn it?

JOURDAIN: What?

PHILOSOPHER: Latin.

JOURDAIN: Is it all as good as that?

PHILOSOPHER: Well, not all. . . .

JOURDAIN: Then I won't bother.

PHILOSOPHER: Well, what would you like to start with?

JOURDAIN: What could I start with?

PHILOSOPHER: You might start with Moral Sciences.

JOURDAIN: What's that?

PHILOSOPHER : Moral Science ?
JOURDAIN : Yes, what does that teach ?
PHILOSOPHER : It teaches us to control our passions.
JOURDAIN : Oh, no, no, no ! None o' that ! Now, I'm as rich as I want, I want to be as cross as I want whenever I want.
PHILOSOPHER : There *are* other passions.
JOURDAIN : There *are*, there *are*. You're quite right, there are—and I'm not going to have anyone controlling *those !* Not you, not me ! Let 'em rip, say I. Now I can afford it, let 'em rip. No, I tell you what. Teach me to understand what People of Quality are talking about, so that when they talk to me they don't seem to be talking utter nonsense.
PHILOSOPHER : Ah, then I'm afraid we shall have to begin right at the beginning ; we must go right back to the letters themselves.
JOURDAIN : What letters ?
PHILOSOPHER : *The* letters.
JOURDAIN : Whose letters ?
PHILOSOPHER : The alphabet.
JOURDAIN : Oh, those letters. Yes.
PHILOSOPHER : The vowels and the consonants.
JOURDAIN : Yes, I've heard of 'em.
PHILOSOPHER : There are five vowels : AH, EH, EE, AW, OO.
JOURDAIN : That's right. I got just about as far as that at school.
PHILOSOPHER : AH is formed by opening the mouth wide. So—*AH.*
JOURDAIN (*copying*) : *AH.* So it is !
PHILOSOPHER : EH is formed by slighly approaching the lower towards the upper jaw. So—AH . . . *EH.*
JOURDAIN (*copying*) : AH—*EH.* Right again. Wonderful.
PHILOSOPHER : EE is formed by bringing the jaws

yet closer together while stretching the corners of the mouth in the direction of the ears. AH—EH—*EE.*

JOURDAIN (*copying*): AH—EH—*EE.* (*Delighted.*) EE What fun this is!

PHILOSOPHER: AW—by opening the mouth while closing the lips. So—AH—EH—EE—*AW.*

JOURDAIN (*copying*): AH—EH—EE—*AW.* (*He repeats.*) EE—AW. EE—AW. EE—AW. (*He is braying like a donkey.*) Oh, what a thing it is to be a scholar!

PHILOSOPHER: OO by protruding the lips, and making a face as if one is mocking. *OO.*

JOURDAIN: OO—OO—OO. . . . Oh, to think one can learn wisdom just by making a face!

PHILOSOPHER: Now we pass on to the Consonants.

JOURDAIN: No, we don't. We'll do them tomorrow. I want you to help me write a letter to a Marchioness.

PHILOSOPHER: Oh, yes, indeed!

JOURDAIN: And then I thought I might drop it at her feet.

PHILOSOPHER: At her feet!

JOURDAIN: Would that be all right?

PHILOSOPHER: Most gallant!

JOURDAIN: That's what I thought.

PHILOSOPHER: You'd want it, of course, in verse.

JOURDAIN: Oh, no, no, no! Dear me, No! Nothing like that! Not in verse.

PHILOSOPHER: In prose.

JOURDAIN: Oh, no, no, no! Dear, me, No! Nothing like that! Not in prose.

PHILOSOPHER: But it must be——

JOURDAIN: Must be what?

PHILOSOPHER: In verse or prose.

JOURDAIN: No, no, no. You don't understand. Expense is no object. I want the best.

PHILOSOPHER : But it must be either prose or verse.
JOURDAIN : You're being very obstinate, Master Philosopher. There's no must about it.
PHILOSOPHER : But, good Monsieur, there *is* only prose and verse. One can only express oneself in prose or verse.
JOURDAIN : Is there nothing else ?
PHILOSOPHER : Nothing. All that's not verse is prose, and all that's not prose is verse.
JOURDAIN : But . . . but . . . what we're talking now, is that prose ?
PHILOSOPHER : Of course.
JOURDAIN : But . . . d'you mean to tell me when I say to Nicole, for instance, get me a clean nightdress, there's a flea in this one—that's prose ?
PHILOSOPHER : Most certainly.
JOURDAIN : Well, well, well, to think I've been talking prose all my life and never knew it ! Really, I am very much obliged to you—I do feel I've learnt something this morning. Now, about the letter : I want to say to the lady—" Loveliest Lady, Your lovely eyes make me die of love." Only I want it expressed very elegantly.
PHILOSOPHER : Well, you might put it that—that the flame of her eyes had reduced your heart to ashes.
JOURDAIN : No, I don't want to go so far as that.
PHILOSOPHER : Or that you're so consumed by the fires of love that, day and night, you suffer the tortures of the damned.
JOURDAIN : Oh, but I don't ! No, I just want what I said—" Loveliest Lady, Your lovely eyes make me die of love."
PHILOSOPHER : Rather short, isn't it ?
JOURDAIN : But I want it short ; so I'll be sure she reads it all. No, I want those words ; but I want them twisted.

PHILOSOPHER : But if you want the same words there are only so many ways they *can* be twisted.
JOURDAIN : Is that so ? What ways ?
PHILOSOPHER : Of love, loveliest lady, your lovely eyes make me die. Your lovely eyes, loveliest lady, of love make me die. Your lovely eyes of love make me die, loveliest lady.
JOURDAIN : Which is best ?
PHILOSOPHER : As you first said it. Loveliest lady, your lovely eyes make me die of love.
JOURDAIN : I got it right the first time ! Come again this afternoon ! (*He hurries the Philosopher towards the door.*) (*He gives a sudden, unexpected yell.*) Flunkey !

[*The Philosopher departs.*]

FIRST FLUNKEY (*appearing*) : Monsieur ?
JOURDAIN : Has my Tailor come ?
FLUNKEY : No, Monsieur.
JOURDAIN (*with another great yell*) : Flunkey !
SECOND FLUNKEY (*appearing*) : Monsieur ?
JOURDAIN : Are you sure my Tailor hasn't come ?
SECOND FLUNKEY : Quite sure, Monsieur.
JOURDAIN : Then he's keeping me waiting ! *Why* is he keeping me waiting ? ! How *dare* he keep me waiting ! ! ! I *won't* be kept waiting ! Who does he think I am ?

[*The Master Tailor, with his Assistant, who carries the new suit, make their appearance behind Jourdain's back. He continues his sudden tirade of fury.*]

Who does he think he is ? The Dastardly Tailor. The skunk, the scamp, the knave, the dog ! But I'll teach him, you wait ! If I had him here I'd . . . I'd . . . . (*He turns to see him, and is suddenly deflated.*)

Oh, there you are! I was just wondering what had become of you.

M. TAILOR (*with a bow*): At your service.

[*The Master Tailor is a very superior person, with a quiet, but immense contempt for Jourdain and all his like.*]

JOURDAIN: These stockings you sent me—I all but couldn't get 'em on at all!

M. TAILOR (*with a supercilious glance at them*): They'll go on easier next time.

JOURDAIN: They'll split.

M. TAILOR: Then you'll want some new ones.

JOURDAIN: And these shoes—they hurt.

M. TAILOR: Oh, no, they don't.

JOURDAIN: Don't!!

M. TAILOR: A perfect fit.

JOURDAIN: Do you mean I imagine they hurt?

M. TAILOR: What you imagine, good Monsieur, is no concern of mine; but they don't hurt. (*To his Assistant.*) Forward, please!

[*The Assistant with the new clothes steps forward.*]

JOURDAIN: Is this my new coat?

M. TAILOR: This is not a coat.

JOURDAIN: But I ordered a coat.

M. TAILOR: It's a Work of Art. No painter could have created anything more exquisite with his brush than I have with my needle.

JOURDAIN: Then it'll look well on me.

M. TAILOR: It will look superb anywhere.

JOURDAIN: Come on, then; let's try it on.

M. TAILOR: I wish it to be understood, Monsieur, I am not here to try my clothes on you; but to try *you* in my clothes! Now, if you please.

[*The Assistant hands Jourdain first his coat; then a full wig; and then a large hat—Jourdain putting them on as*

*he receives them, using a small mirror which the Tailor has produced and is holding for him. He hums the tune of his little "hare" song, more and more enthusiastically until he has on coat, wig, and hat—and proudly displays himself.*]

M. TAILOR: A great triumph, Monsieur—— I shouldn't know you! I am satisfied.

ASST. TAILOR: My lord, would it please you to give the Assistants something to drink your health with?

JOURDAIN: What did you call me?

ASST. TAILOR: "My lord", my lord.

JOURDAIN (*to himself, as he fishes for his purse and extracts a coin*): "My lord". That shows what the right clothes'll do. (*Giving the coin.*) Here you are—from my lord.

ASST. TAILOR: A thousand thanks, your Excellency.

JOURDAIN: Excellency! (*He extracts another coin.*) This, from my Excellency.

ASST. TAILOR: God bless your Grace.

JOURDAIN: "Grace". (*Another coin.*) Take that from my Grace. (*To himself.*) If he goes to my Highness I'll give him the lot.

ASST. TAILOR: May you be rewarded for your generosity.

[*And the Tailors go.*]

JOURDAIN (*looking after them*): They've gone! (*Repocketing his purse.*) P'raps it's as well.

[*He turns to see Nicole, the Jourdains' serving-maid, who has just entered, staring at him.*]

JOURDAIN: Ah, Nicole, my girl; there you are; I was just going to send for you.

NICOLE (*still staring at him, and beginning to giggle*): He, he, he! Oh, dear, oh, dear! He, he, he, he!

JOURDAIN: What is it?

NICOLE : He, he, he, he, he !
JOURDAIN : What's the matter ?
NICOLE : He, he, he, he !
JOURDAIN : What are you laughing at ?
NICOLE : I can't help it ; oh, Master—what a sight !
JOURDAIN : Hold your tongue !
NICOLE : He, he, he, he !
JOURDAIN : Be quiet !
NICOLE : He, he, he !
JOURDAIN : Shut your mouth !

[*Nicole shuts her mouth tight.*]

Now, listen to me, my girl ! If you laugh any more, if you so much as let out one little squeak, you'll get the worst hiding of your life ! Did you hear that ?

[*Nicole, her mouth still tightly shut, nods her head.*]

JOURDAIN : Very well, then. Now——

[*Nicole begins to shake from head to foot with silent and precariously suppressed laughter.*]

NICOLE (*bursting out*) : It's no good, I can't keep it in. Oh, beat me, Master, you'll have to beat me, and then I can have a real good laugh, a real good belly laugh—I shall feel so much better that way. (*She collapses in helpless laughter.*)
JOURDAIN : Was there ever such a hussy ! Laughing in my face ! Refusing to listen to the orders I want to give her——
NICOLE (*trying to stop laughing*) : Oh, I'm sorry, Master, I'm sorry. What orders, Master—what orders ?
JOURDAIN : Tonight I'm giving a grand party. Very grand.
NICOLE : Oh, if you'd said that to start with, Master,

I wouldn't have wanted to laugh at all. These grand friends of yours—the mess they make!

MADAME J. (*his wife, entering, and seeing Jourdain*): Lord, lov' a duck! God 'a mercy! Something new! Worse and worse! What have you got on now? What d'you call that?

JOURDAIN: A Work of Art!

MADAME J.: My good man, are you absolutely determined to make a laughing stock of yourself before the whole world?

JOURDAIN: Only the ignorant will laugh.

MADAME J.: Don't you believe it. They're all laughing already.

JOURDAIN: And who's "all", if I may ask?

MADAME J.: All your old friends, because your new friends are making such a fool of you; and all your new friends, because you're making such a fool of yourself.

NICOLE: It's true, dear Master, it's true—with your Music teacher and your Dancing teacher.

MADAME J.: Dancing teacher indeed! What d'you want to learn dancing for? So you can dance when you're too old to walk?

NICOLE: And now there's another one, Madame—a Philosopher.

MADAME J.: Oh, don't tell me that!

JOURDAIN: And why not, pray? What's wrong with that? Why shouldn't I wish to be wise, and understand everything?

MADAME J.: You'll be running back to school next; with your little satchel on your back; and getting a good caning.

JOURDAIN: I would, I would, gladly, if just by being caned I could know everything they teach at school.

MADAME J.: And what good would that do you?

JOURDAIN: What good?

NICOLE : Yes, what good, Master ?
JOURDAIN : You make me ashamed to be talking to you ! Listen : I'll tell you something. (*To his wife.*) What you're saying now—what is it ?
MADAME J. : What I'm saying now ?
JOURDAIN : Yes.
MADAME J. : I'm saying, at your age, you'll never be a dancer or a philosopher, and it won't do any of us any good, if you try.
JOURDAIN : No, no, no ! . . . What is it, what you're saying ?
MADAME J. : Sense, my good man, sound sense !
JOURDAIN : No, no, no ! That's not what I mean. What I'm saying now, what is it ?
MADAME J. : Nonsense. Stupid nonsense.
JOURDAIN : God give me patience ! The words we're speaking, what are they called ?
MADAME J. : I don't know what you're talking about !
JOURDAIN : Prose, my good woman, prose.
MADAME J. : Prose ?
JOURDAIN : Yes.
MADAME J. : Why ?
JOURDAIN : Why ? !
MADAME J. : Yes, why ?
JOURDAIN : Well, because . . . because it isn't verse. Whatever isn't verse is prose ; and whatever isn't prose is verse. You didn't know that. And I'll teach you something (*he turns to Nicole*) . . . where's my stick ?
NICOLE : You're not going to beat me ?
JOURDAIN : No, No, No. (*He takes hold of his stick.*) Now—you get hold of your broomstick.

[*With his stick as a foil, he takes up the fencing position.*]

Now try and hit me if you can.

[*Nicole gives him several prods in the stomach and ribs with her broomstick.*]

Ow, ow, ow, *ow*, *oo*, *ow !*—Oh, what ignorance. You're thrusting in tierce, while I'm defending in carte. . . .

MADAME J. : My dear, what utter nonsense all this is ! But there's something worse than nonsense about it. This Count, that's always about the place——

JOURDAIN : Please !——

MADAME J. : He's a bad egg, if ever there was one !

JOURDAIN : Sssh ! You don't know who you're talking about ! He's a friend of the King's ; he talks to the King—just as you talk to me. Think of that ! Isn't it an honour that a man, who talks to the King, should talk to me ! And as an equal. I ask you ! Calls me his friend—his dear friend.

MADAME J. : And then borrows your money !

JOURDAIN : Isn't it an honour to lend money to a man who talks to the King ? And, besides, if you knew what he was doing for me——

MADAME J. : What is he doing for you ?

JOURDAIN (*confused*) : Eh ! . . . Oh ! Nothing ! I didn't mean to mention it ! But, all the same, you'd be surprised if you knew !

MADAME J. : What *are* you talking about ?

JOURDAIN : Never mind. I've lent him money, and he'll pay it back—and that's all !

MADAME J. : He'll pay it back ?

JOURDAIN : Yes.

MADAME J. : You think so.

JOURDAIN : He's promised.

MADAME J. : Promised !

JOURDAIN : On his honour.

MADAME J. : His honour !

JOURDAIN : As a gentleman.

MADAME J. : Gentleman !
JOURDAIN : And a Count——
FIRST FLUNKEY (*entering and announcing*) : His Excellency, the Count Dorante.
MADAME J. : Come to borrow some more money.
JOURDAIN : To pay it back.
MADAME J. : We shall see.
COUNT (*entering and speaking as he enters*) : My friend, my dear, dear, friend ! And Madame, too—this is indeed a pleasure. And wonderful you're looking, my dear fellow—quite the Courtier.
MADAME J. (*aside to Nicole*) : He scratches him where it itches !
COUNT (*to Jourdain*) : Turn round.

[*Jourdain does.*]

Astonishing !
MADAME J. (*aside to Nicole*) : Just as silly from behind as in front !
COUNT (*to Jourdain*) : And you know, when I opened my eyes this morning, I found myself possessed with an irresistible desire to see you today——
JOURDAIN : Oh ! ! You don't say so !
COUNT : And what's so strange about that ? You're not only my friend, but my best friend—I was saying something of the sort to the King within this half-hour.
JOURDAIN (*to Madame Jourdain*) : Did you hear that ?
COUNT : On several occasions lately, my friend, my dear friend, my best of friends, my more than generous friend——
MADAME J. (*under her breath, to Jourdain*) : Now we're coming to it !
JOURDAIN (*out of the corner of his mouth, to his wife*) : SSSSH !——

COUNT : You've been good enough to advance me certain sums of money.

MADAME J. (*aside to Nicole*) : He has, the fool !

COUNT : And, to be quite frank, that's why I'm here today. I've come to settle my little account with you.

JOURDAIN (*under his breath, to his wife*) : Who's the fool now !

COUNT : You have, I hope, kept a record of all I've had from you ?

JOURDAIN : Yes, yes, I have. I have it here. The first loan was for a hundred crowns.

COUNT : Correct.

[*Jourdain takes a paper from his desk and reads from it.*]

JOURDAIN : Then a hundred and fifty.

COUNT : That's so.

JOURDAIN : Then two hundred.

COUNT : Quite right.

JOURDAIN : Then three hundred to your Sadler.

COUNT : Yes.

JOURDAIN : Five hundred, to your Tailor.

COUNT : So you did.

JOURDAIN : And a little matter of seven hundred and sixty-five crowns twelve francs and two and a half sous, to settle your Grocer's bill.

COUNT : And how much is that in all ?

JOURDAIN : In all ? A trifle over two thousand crowns. Shall we say two thousand ?

COUNT : With pleasure we'll say two thousand. And if you'll add a further thousand, which I'm going to borrow now, I'll let you have the full three thousand as soon as ever I can manage it.

MADAME J. (*to Nicole*) : What did I say ?

COUNT : You're sure it won't inconvenience you to add a thousand ?——

JOURDAIN : Oh no, no. Not at all. Not at all.

COUNT : You'll be honest with me, good Jourdain, honesty above everything ! It would be quite simple for me to get twice the amount from another friend——

JOURDAIN : No, no, no. I wouldn't hear of it——

COUNT : But as you're my best friend, I thought it would be wrong not to let you have the first offer.

JOURDAIN : Oh, I'm glad you did, so glad.

COUNT : Then perhaps you'll let me have it at once. Most unexpectedly I find myself a little short.

JOURDAIN : At once, at once. I have it here.

MADAME J. (*who is now close to him*) : Who's the fool now ?

COUNT (*to Madame—while Jourdain is at his desk—gallantly*) : And how does the good lady of the house find herself ?

MADAME J. : Find herself ? By always knowing where she is, and what she's doing—which is more than I can say of some people I know.

JOURDAIN (*returning, to give the Count his money*) : A thousand.

COUNT (*taking it*) : I thank you. And believe me, you won't regret it. I tell you the beautiful, the most desirable. . . .

JOURDAIN (*covering the mention of the Marchioness with a cough*) : Ahem, ahem—not so loud, if you don't mind ; a little further off ; if you'd be so good. (*He takes him by the arm and walks him away.*) Pardon me, if you'd step this way . . . (*and when out of earshot of Madame and Nicole*) . . . Yes. You were saying, the beautiful Marchioness——

COUNT : ——will be with you here tonight ; and has accepted the ring you gave me to give her.

MADAME J. (*to Nicole*) : Now he's got what he came for, why doesn't he go ?

COUNT : I tell you, she took some persuading ! She

knew its immense value; and wouldn't accept it—until I told her that its worth did but match the great depth of the love that prompted the gift.

JOURDAIN: Oh, good, good! I shouldn't have thought of that.

COUNT: And altho' she pretends not to be, she's so pleased and proud of it—in spite of herself, she keeps drawing attention to it. (*He becomes very confidential.*) Yes, my good Jourdain, I think—— (*their heads are very close together.*)

JOURDAIN: Yes?

COUNT: I feel sure——

JOURDAIN: Yes?——

COUNT: ——to put it plainly and bluntly, this ring of yours has done the trick.

JOURDAIN: Pray God it has.

MADAME J. (*to Nicole*): What are they up to?

JOURDAIN (*continuing, to the Count*): You see, I've never even spoken to a lady of Quality.

NICOLE: No good.

JOURDAIN: And to think that one as beautiful as this one——

MADAME J.: You're right.

JOURDAIN: ——to me, good Monsieur, like something out of a fairy tale or a dream—should actually be coming to my house, and will take notice of me——

MADAME J. (*to Nicole*): Go and try if you can hear what they're saying.

[*Nicole begins, cautiously, to edge round behind them.*]

COUNT: Of course, when she comes to your house for the first time, you must expect her to be the very height of discretion.

JOURDAIN: Oh indeed, indeed!

COUNT : She may even appear to pay more attention to me, than to you.
JOURDAIN : May she ?
COUNT : But the more she does, the more you may hope !
JOURDAIN : May I ?
COUNT : And in the meantime, you can feast your eyes on her, and await your opportunity.

[*Nicole has reached them—she is close behind them, unobserved.*]

JOURDAIN : I've arranged that my wife should spend the evening with her sister.
COUNT : No husband could be more considerate. It's quite possible Madame would not really appreciate your guest, or her entertainment. . . . Well, dear fellow, I must be getting on my way. I have to visit the Marchioness——
JOURDAIN : Eh ?
COUNT : ——to make the final arrangements for her visit here.
JOURDAIN : Oh, ah, yes—of course.
COUNT : I shall go on foot. The sun is out, and the way short.
JOURDAIN : If I might come some of the way with you——
COUNT : Well——
JOURDAIN : It would be a great honour.
COUNT : My dear fellow !
JOURDAIN : To be seen walking with a friend of the King's. Of course it would.
COUNT : Well . . . some of the way !
JOURDAIN : Yes !
COUNT : But not too far !
JOURDAIN : No !
COUNT : Not within sight of her house.

JOURDAIN : No ?
COUNT : On no account. Most ill-advised ; might spoil everything.
JOURDAIN : Oh, I don't want to do that !
COUNT : Of course not.
JOURDAIN (*his sudden yell*) : *Flunkey ! !*
COUNT (*entirely taken by surprise*) : Good God !
FIRST FLUNKEY (*appearing*) : Monsieur ?
JOURDAIN : I'm going out.
SECOND FLUNKEY (*appearing*) : Monsieur called ?
JOURDAIN : I'm going out with his Excellency. Our hats !

[*The First Flunkey gives his hat to Dorante, the Second to Jourdain.*]

JOURDAIN : Thank yer ! . . . Now, walk in front of us, together. . . . No ! . . . You in front ; you, behind. . . . That's right ! So ! . . . off we go——

[*And so they go—First Flunkey, Jourdain and the Count, Second Flunkey.*]

NICOLE : I couldn't hear everything, Madame, but I did hear——
MADAME J. : Yes ?
NICOLE : This——
MADAME J. : Yes ? ?
NICOLE : You're being packed off to your sister's this evening, Madame, because——
MADAME J. : Yes ? ? ?
NICOLE : They don't want you here.
MADAME J. : Would you believe it ! Did you ever ! But it doesn't surprise me ! I've had my suspicions. . . . I thought something was in the wind . . . the old scoundrel ! Well, I don't go to my sister's this evening, that's certain. I stay here. And we'll see

what he's up to. . . . Oh dear, oh dear—the things I have on my mind! Trouble upon trouble!

NICOLE: What's on your mind? What trouble, Madame?

MADAME J.: My daughter!

NICOLE: What's wrong with *her*?

MADAME J.: She loves Cléonte.

NICOLE: What's wrong with *him*?

MADAME J.: He loves her.

NICOLE: What's wrong with *that*?

MADAME J.: I want them to get married.

NICOLE: Oh what happiness! That makes me so happy! You don't know! But what's the trouble?

MADAME J.: The Master! Suppose he shouldn't allow it.

NICOLE: I can't believe that.

MADAME J.: I shouldn't have believed it, a few weeks ago. But he's getting worse and worse every day.

NICOLE: True enough.

MADAME J.: Ever since that Count came to the house.

NICOLE: True again!

MADAME J.: Every day some new folly, every hour some new foppery——

NICOLE: True, true, true.

MADAME J.: Oh, Nicole, my girl, we're making head-long down-hill, into the Aristocracy.

NICOLE: Then, dear madame, if I may say so, the sooner we get the Master's consent, the better.

MADAME J.: You're right, my girl; indeed you are . . . and the more I think about it, the righter you are . . . we haven't a moment to lose. Not a moment. You run along to Monsieur Cléonte——

NICOLE: Now?

MADAME J.: ——this moment. And ask him to come

here, at once. And we'll all do everything we can to gain the Master's consent to an immediate marriage, before we're an hour older.

NICOLE : Oh, Madame ! Dear Madame ! You don't know what this means to *me !*

MADAME J. : To *you ?*

NICOLE : For when your daughter marries Monsieur Cléonte—*I'm* to marry his man !

MADAME J. : Well I never ! And I'm sure I'm very glad. He seems a good enough fellow—very fond of his Master.

NICOLE : And of me, too.

MADAME J. : And I hope you're as happy as you deserve to be !

NICOLE : Oh, happier, Madame ! I hope ! Much happier !

[*Music starts. Quietly.*]

MADAME J. : Off you go ! As fast as your legs will carry you. And I'll go prepare Lucille.

NICOLE : Oh, but how pleased they'll be when I tell them. How pleased ! Both of them !

[*The music swells up, as she runs off, Madame Jourdain disappearing in the opposite direction.*]

*Curtain*

# ACT TWO

## *Scene* I

*A Street. Cléonte and his servant, Covielle, enter from one side, as Nicole runs on from the other.*

NICOLE: Oh, Master Cléonte! Good Master Cléonte —— (*She drops him a curtsy.*) Such news! . . . . Oh, Covielle! Such great news! (*But the two young men just stare at her.*)

CLÉONTE (*to Covielle*): Who's this?

COVIELLE (*to Cléonte*): No idea!

NICOLE (*in amazement*): But, Master Cléonte! What's this? Is it a joke?

CLÉONTE (*to Covielle*): She spoke to me!

COVIELLE (*to Cléonte*): Impertinence!

NICOLE (*even more amazed*): But Covielle! Dear Covielle!

CLÉONTE (*to Covielle*): Do you know her?

COVIELLE (*to Cléonte*): Do I——? What d'you take me for?

NICOLE: But, Master Cléonte—I come from my mistress. My young mistress.

CLÉONTE: Then go back to your mistress.

NICOLE: But what shall I tell her?

CLÉONTE: If you must speak of us, tell her you spoke to strangers.

NICOLE: Strangers!

CLÉONTE: If you must have it, tell her that all is over!

NICOLE: Over?

CLÉONTE: I've finished with her.

NICOLE: Finished?

COVIELLE: Finished!!

CLÉONTE: I never want to see her face or hear her voice again.

NICOLE: But this is madness! Covielle, you too?

COVIELLE : Haven't you ears ? Didn't you hear ? I never want to see your face, or hear your voice again.
CLÉONTE : Off with you !
COVIELLE (*copying his master*) : Off with you ! !
CLÉONTE : Away !
COVIELLE : Away ! !
NICOLE : Well ! ! ! . . . here's a nice story to take home to the mistress !

[*She runs back the way she came.*]

CLÉONTE : So much for her !
COVIELLE : And her ! !
CLÉONTE : It's utterly unforgivable the way she's treated me. Unforgivable ! . . . Isn't it ?
COVIELLE : Unforgivable !
CLÉONTE : I've loved her ! So completely ! So passionately ! . . . Haven't I ?
COVIELLE : Oh yes, you have, you have.
CLÉONTE : I've loved no one in the world—but her. She's filled my whole life. She's been my joy, my hope, my desire—hasn't she ?
COVIELLE : Oh yes, she has !
CLÉONTE : I speak of no one, but her ; I think of no one, but her ; dream of no one, but her . . . don't I ?
COVIELLE : No.
CLÉONTE : What ?
COVIELLE : Yes.
CLÉONTE : And what do I get for it ? Two whole days without seeing her. Two days that pass like centuries. Then I meet her in the street, by chance—by sheer chance.
COVIELLE : Sheer chance.
CLÉONTE : At the very sight of her, I'm transported ! My happiness, my joy, shines in my face—didn't it ?
COVIELLE : It did.

CLÉONTE : I rush across the road, my arms open to greet her—and she turns away ! With averted head, she passes on, as if she's never even seen me before——

COVIELLE : And so did the other one.

CLÉONTE : After all the vows that we've breathed to one another ; so softly, so lovingly, in the subdued light of the drawing-room.

COVIELLE : After all the dirty work that went on in the kitchen.

CLÉONTE : The burning passion that consumed me when I touched her lips——

COVIELLE : The heat I endured when I helped her cook——

CLÉONTE : The tears I've shed——

COVIELLE : The buckets of water I've dragged around——

CLÉONTE : She turned her face away——

COVIELLE : ——presented me with her backside——

CLÉONTE : Such cruelty deserves an exquisite revenge——

COVIELLE : ——a kick in the pants.

CLÉONTE : Never speak to me of her again.

COVIELLE : God forbid !

CLÉONTE : Because nothing you can say on her behalf . . . nothing, nothing ! . . . will be of the least avail.

COVIELLE : Who's saying anything on her behalf !

CLÉONTE : I must nurse and nourish the glowing embers of my resentment, that it may burn and blaze ; and all my love for her be turned to ashes ; and this break with her be complete, final and irrevocable.

COVIELLE : Me too !

CLÉONTE : I can see it all now—as plainly as I can see you. It's that Count !—who's been hanging

about the house. I've wondered what he was after. He was after *her*. And she's fallen for it. Dazzled by a title. She's thrown me over for him. But she *shan't !* She *shan't !*

COVIELLE : But she *has !*

CLÉONTE : No. Because I'm going to throw her over—before she has a chance to make a fool of me.

COVIELLE : Oh, Yes, Yes, Yes. What a thing it is to be a gentleman ! That's what I'll do to the other one.

CLÉONTE : I'm resolved! Unshakeably resolved!—— But you must help my resolution ! Quick, Covielle ! Quick, quick, quick. Tell me all the bad things about her that you can think of. Describe her to me. Paint such a picture of her, that I can hate.

COVIELLE : Oh, that's easy.

CLÉONTE : Is it ?

COVIELLE : O' course it is. The little minx ! The faithless light o' love—that's all she is.

CLÉONTE : Is she ?

COVIELLE : Yes—you can see it in her eyes. They're small. Haven't you noticed, Master, how small they are ?

CLÉONTE : But how they shine, and sparkle, and melt! Deep pools of desire—in which a man might drown, and die an exquisite death.

COVIELLE : And her mouth, Master ! Have you noticed her mouth ? How large !

CLÉONTE : But how generous ! How provocative ! How made for kissing ! A mouth to drive a man insane.

COVIELLE : And then there's not enough of her, Master ! Nothing to get hold of ! Just a slip of a thing !

CLÉONTE : But how well formed! Every line significant ! What heavenly design !

COVIELLE : And the way she moves ! Flops about the place—careless, I call it.
CLÉONTE : Careless ? Indeed ! Such natural grace is hers, she has no need of care.
COVIELLE : Her talk——
CLÉONTE : Subtle, delicate, delicious——
COVIELLE : Too clever by half ! I've heard her chatter away for half an hour, and never a smile.
CLÉONTE : Great God, man, would you have her silly ? Is there anything more exasperating than a woman who laughs at all you say !
COVIELLE : But you never know where you are, with her, Master ! I've got you there ! You can't deny that. She's changing all the time.
CLÉONTE : And how *rich* that is ! When every aspect of her is lovely, and more exciting than the last ! Not one lover is my love—but many.
COVIELLE : Oh, Master, what's the good ! I can see you mean to go on loving her, whatever I can say.
CLÉONTE : I'd die rather. I hate her.
COVIELLE : And think everything about her, perfect !
CLÉONTE : Which also shows how much I hate !—— More fiercely than ever I have loved. . . . Here she is. . . .

[*Lucille enters, with Nicole.*]

NICOLE (*speaking as she appears*) : You can imagine, Mistress, what a shock it was !
LUCILLE : It must have been ! . . . But look, Nicole . . . see, there he is !

[*The two girls stop . . . then slowly approach the two men. . . . who turn away.*]

CLÉONTE : I'll not speak to her.
COVIELLE : Nor me.

LUCILLE : Cléonte ! . . . Dear Cléonte ! . . . What is it ? What's the matter ? What's amiss ?
NICOLE : Covielle ! What's up ?
LUCILLE : I must have angered you. But how, and why, and when ?
NICOLE (*to Covielle*) : Come on, what's biting you ?
LUCILLE (*to Cléonte*) : Have you been struck dumb ?
NICOLE (*to Covielle*) : Swallowed your tongue ?
CLÉONTE : Hark ! Hark at them !
COVIELLE : I'm harking !
LUCILLE : Cléonte, even if you no longer wish to look at me, surely you'll deign to speak. Is it because of this morning ? Of what happened when we met each other in the street ?
CLÉONTE (*to Covielle*) : Did you hear that ?
COVIELLE : I heard.
LUCILLE : Cléonte, please answer ! At least, pay me that courtesy ! Is that the reason ?
CLÉONTE (*rounding on her*) : Yes. Since you force it from me, Yes. But don't imagine you can crow over me. Don't suppose you can glory in your unfaithfulness. Because I'm breaking with you now ; before you have time to send me packing.
LUCILLE : Really, what a to-do about so little !
CLÉONTE : So little !
LUCILLE : About nothing.
CLÉONTE : Nothing ! !
LUCILLE : Let me explain——
CLÉONTE : I'll not hear——
LUCILLE : Oh yes, you must !——
CLÉONTE : Indeed——
LUCILLE : I insist——
CLÉONTE : I refuse——
NICOLE (*to Covielle*) : Here you, listen !——
COVIELLE : I can't.
NICOLE : Why not ?

COVIELLE : I'm deaf !
LUCILLE : Cléonte !
CLÉONTE : No.
NICOLE : Covielle ?
COVIELLE (*cupping his ear at her*) : Eh ?
LUCILLE : Two words.
CLÉONTE : Not one.
NICOLE (*to Covielle*) : A word——
COVIELLE : You spoke ?
LUCILLE (*suddenly blazing with anger*) : This is insufferable !
CLÉONTE : It is indeed !
LUCILLE : Ve . . ry well ! If that's the attitude you're going to take, you had better think what you please, and do as you prefer. Good-bye !
NICOLE (*copying her mistress*) : D'you hear ? You can keep your silly trap shut, and get on with it !
LUCILLE : Come, Nicole !
NICOLE : *De*-lighted !

[*And the two girls move away.*]

CLÉONTE (*calling after them*) : One moment !
LUCILLE (*stopping*) : Yes ? . . . You spoke, I think ?
CLÉONTE : . . . Perhaps, after all, you'd favour us with a few remarks on your extraordinary behaviour.
LUCILLE : A few remarks ? ?
CLÉONTE : As to why you behaved so—unaccountably.
LUCILLE : I see no need. (*And she continues towards the exit.*]
CLÉONTE (*more urgently*) : Lucille !

[*Again she stops.*]

. . . please ! . . .
LUCILLE : " Please " ! . . . Did I hear please ?

CLÉONTE : At least, an explanation. That's all I ask.
LUCILLE : No.
CLÉONTE : Surely you can grant that ! A few sentences ! A sentence ! A few words !——
LUCILLE : Not one !
CLÉONTE : Have pity !
COVIELLE (*to Nicole*) : Have a heart !
NICOLE : I have. And it's my own.
CLÉONTE : Lucille, I beg ! I beseech ! Dispel these doubts ! This black uncertainty——
LUCILLE : Doubts ? Of what ? And who's uncertain ?
COVIELLE (*to Nicole*) : Nicole ! My girl——
NICOLE (*cupping her ear at him*) : What's that ?
COVIELLE (*giving it up*) : Oh, I know—you're deaf ! !
CLÉONTE : I see ! I understand ! It's plain ! You'll not explain, because you have no explanation that you dare to make. No shred of an excuse. No word in your defence—not one. And that being so, this is the end. The End ! We're looking at each other for the last time. Good-bye. Farewell. . . . I wish you every happiness. For myself, I shall go to the ends of the world—and die of grief ! . . . (*To Covielle.*) Come !

[*And the two men move away.*]

LUCILLE : . . . Cléonte ! . . .
CLÉONTE (*stopping—as she did*) : Yes ? . . . You spoke, I think ?
LUCILLE : Where did you say you were going ?
COVIELLE : To our graves !
CLÉONTE : Since you wish it.
LUCILLE : Who told you that ?
CLÉONTE : Isn't it obvious ? Since you'll not breathe one word to save my life !
COVILLE : Or mine ?
LUCILLE : . . . Now listen, Cléonte. . . .

NICOLE : You too, Covielle.
LUCILLE : This morning, when we met you in the street——
CLÉONTE : And passed us by——
COVIELLE : Without a word——
LUCILLE : Did you notice—we were not alone.
CLÉONTE : There was a lady with you—an old lady.
COVIELLE : An old frump.
LUCILLE : My Grandmother ! " Frump ", if you will. Also *old*-fashioned—and possessed of Principles. From my earliest childhood, I have been taught, she was to be obeyed. One of her unshakeable beliefs is this : all men are devils. And though, at times, in private, one is forced to approach them, in public, one should always be unaware of their presence. So, respecting her opinions—as I should yours—I passed you by.
CLÉONTE : Can this be true ?
LUCILLE : Should I invent——
COVIELLE : It's good enough for me !
NICOLE : And now, good Monsieur—— (*She runs to him, and bobs a curtsy.*) Let me deliver the message with which I started !

[*Music begins, softly at first.*]

From Madame Jourdain. She invites you to come to her house, as soon as possible—indeed, now, at once ; to ask Monsieur Jourdain, formally, for the hand of his daughter in marriage.
CLÉONTE : My dear girl, why ever didn't you say so in the first place ! What are we waiting for ? What are we doing—standing about here arguing . . . ! Lucille ! (*He offers her his arm with gallantry.*) My dearest ! My beloved !
LUCILLE (*taking his arm, and matching gallantry with graciousness*) : My own ! We'll go together ! . . .

[*And, together, they move towards the exit. As soon as their backs are turned, the two servants run together and give each other a great smacking kiss . . . and follow. The Music swells up. The Curtain comes down.*]

## *Scene 2*

*Jourdain's room again. Jourdain enters, followed by Madame Jourdain.*

JOURDAIN (*speaking as he enters*) : *Who* did you say was coming ?

MADAME J. : Cléonte . . . young Cléonte.

JOURDAIN : Oh, young Cléonte. . . . Yes . . . nice young fellow. . . . I like him . . . glad to see him —what's he coming for ?

MADAME J. : Well . . . I . . . er . . . I. . . .

JOURDAIN (*catching her hesitation*) : Eh ? What's this ?

MADAME J. : I . . . I can't say——

JOURDAIN : You can't say ?

MADAME J. : No.

JOURDAIN : Oh ! . . . Well, if you don't know, you can't say . . . can you ?

MADAME J. : No——

JOURDAIN : Because, if you *did* know, you *could* say—couldn't yer ?

MADAME J. : He's coming to see *you*—I know that.

JOURDAIN : To see *me ?*

MADAME J. : Yes. Specially.

JOURDAIN : What's he want to see *me* for ?

MADAME J. : Why shouldn't he want to see you ?

JOURDAIN : What's he want ?

MADAME J. : Why should he want anything ?

JOURDAIN : Nobody ever comes to see anyone with as much money as I've got without wanting something. It's a bit of a drawback——

MADAME J. : Oh, well—better leave it to him.

JOURDAIN : When's he coming ?

MADAME J. : He's here !

JOURDAIN : Here ! (*He looks around him.*) You've got better eyes than I have.

MADAME J. : He's with Lucille !

JOURDAIN : *With Lucille !* Oh, he is, is he ? The young spark ! With Lucille—well, I never ! . . . I don't suppose he wants to see me at all !

MADAME J. : Oh yes, he does.

JOURDAIN : How d'you know ?

MADAME J. : He told me.

JOURDAIN : Oh ! . . . Well, he's come on a lucky day.

MADAME J. : Has he ?

JOURDAIN : Yes.

MADAME J. : I'm very glad to hear it.

JOURDAIN : Why ?

MADAME J. : Oh . . . because . . . well—I *like* lucky days.

JOURDAIN : Yes. My Fencing Master's not coming this afternoon ; he jabbed me so hard in the ribs, I've got a bruise that size. Black and blue, I am. And as stiff as a poker—so I put him off. And I twisted my ankle doing the minuet—so I put off the Dancing Master. And with all these aches and pains, what's the use of Philosophy ! So I put off the Philosopher too. . . . Oh, by the way, don't forget you're spending the evening with your sister.

MADAME J. : I won't forget ! (*She gives a bitter little laugh.*) I won't forget.

JOURDAIN : I don't see what's funny about it——

MADAME J. : Nor do I ! . . . Here he is.

JOURDAIN : Who ?
MADAME J. : Cléonte.

[*Cléonte is standing in the doorway.*]

JOURDAIN : Ah, there you are, my boy ! Come in. Glad to see you. Very glad. How are you ?
CLÉONTE : Well, I thank you, Monsieur Jourdain, very well ; and I hope you are.
JOURDAIN : Me ? Oh, not so bad, thank yer, not so bad . . . great thing to be as busy as I am—So nice when you're not !

[*Cléonte has been followed into the room by Lucille ; and then, by Nicole and Covielle.*]

JOURDAIN (*seeing them*) : Hullo, hullo ! What's all this ? Quite a Gathering ! Have you *all* come to see me ?
CLÉONTE (*getting, progressively, now it comes to the point, more nervous and tongue-tied*) : . . . No, Monsieur Jourdain . . . it is I . . . who . . . who wish to see you. . . .
JOURDAIN : Oh . . . yes.
CLÉONTE : Yes.
JOURDAIN : Well . . . here I am !
CLÉONTE : . . . Yes.
JOURDAIN : As large as life !
CLÉONTE : . . . Yes.
JOURDAIN : When you say you want to see me, I take it you mean more than you just want to have a look at me !
CLÉONTE : Yes . . . I . . . I have something I wish to say to you.
JOURDAIN : Well—go ahead.
CLÉONTE : Yes. . . .
JOURDAIN : Come on ! You've a tongue in yer head ; and I've got ears.

CLÉONTE : Yes . . . I . . . I won't . . . I won't . . .
JOURDAIN : Won't what ?
CLÉONTE : ——won't hesitate——
JOURDAIN : You surprise me !
CLÉONTE : I won't beat about the bush——
JOURDAIN : You don't say so !
CLÉONTE : ——or waste your time——
JOURDAIN : You're having a dam' good whack at it !
CLÉONTE : I mean, Monsieur, I mean that as I have only one thought in my head, one desire in my heart, I have only one thing to say.
JOURDAIN : *Well, say it ! ! !*

[*Lucille makes a sudden swift movement, to stand by Cléonte's side, and following her, Madame Jourdain moves to his other side. Thus fortified, the young man at last comes to the point.*]

CLÉONTE : Monsieur Jourdain, I have the honour to ask for the hand of your daughter . . . in marriage.

[*After which, there are a few moments of utter silence . . . then*——)

JOURDAIN (*quietly*) : . . . I see . . . so that's it ! . . . that's what it's all about ! . . . I see. (*And he relapses into silence again.*)
LUCILLE (*not being able to endure the silence*) : Father !
JOURDAIN : Yes, my dear ?
LUCILLE : Haven't you any more to say ?
JOURDAIN : No. Not much
MADAME J. : Husband !
JOURDAIN : Yes, my love ?
MADAME J. : Haven't you any questions to ask him ?
JOURDAIN : No. . . . Just one, that's all. . . . Young man !——
CLÉONTE : Yes, Monsieur ?
JOURDAIN : Answer me this ! . . . are you of gentle

birth? Have you noble blood in your veins? Are you, in short, and in fact—an Aristocrat?

CLÉONTE: Most men, good Monsieur, would have very little difficulty in answering that. They would lay claim to all kinds of Titles and Honours and Distinctions to which they have no conceivable right. For these days, Family Trees crop up, common as Weeds. But—or, so it seems to me—a man must have very little honour, and a great deal of cowardice, to deny his birth. And to strut about in a borrowed plumage, which is for the most part extremely unbecoming, pathetically foolish, and indeed, downright ridiculous. . . .

JOURDAIN: Ah! . . . You think so. . . . You haven't answered my question. . . .

CLÉONTE: But I will, good Monsieur, and without hesitation—I will: My parents were plain, honest, hard-working tradespeople. I have served my time in the Army; and have enough money to keep a wife and family—but, if you ask me if I am of gentle birth, with noble blood in my veins, an Aristocrat—I answer, proudly—*No!*

JOURDAIN: Splendid, splendid! I admire your frankness. It does you credit—every word of it, and you can't have her; my daughter's not for you.

CLÉONTE: I beg your pardon!

JOURDAIN: What for?

CLÉONTE: You refuse?

JOURDAIN: But of course I do—my dear boy, what did you think?

MADAME J.: What's all this nonsense about Gentle Birth and Aristocracy? Good heavens, man! What about *us!* Are we descended from the Kings of France?

JOURDAIN: Hold your tongue! What *d'you* know about the Kings of France?

MADAME J. : As much as you ! And a lot they've got to do with us ! Weren't our people the same as his—honest, hard-working tradespeople ?

JOURDAIN : Quiet !

MADAME J. : At least mine were. I don't know about yours. I've always doubted whether they were honest !

JOURDAIN : Will you be quiet ! If our parents were lowly, isn't that all the more reason my daughter should marry above her ?

MADAME J. : *Your* daughter ? Who are you talkin' about ? I'm talking about *my* daughter ! And my daughter wants a decent man who'll love her for herself, and make her a good husband. Not one who thinks she's low, and he's high-and-mighty, and will look down on her.

NICOLE : That's right, Madame—in our village, there's an Aristocrat, who won't talk to anyone beneath him ; and as he thinks he's the highest-of-the-high, he never opens his mouth ; not from one year's end to the other, he doesn't !

JOURDAIN : And you shut yours ! And keep it shut ! My daughter's to be a Lady of Quality.

MADAME J. : And I won't have it.

JOURDAIN : And I'm quite determined.

MADAME J. (*to Nicole*) : He'll drive me mad ! What am I to do with him ? (*Again to her husband.*) Do you want a son-in-law who's ashamed of you ?

JOURDAIN : Why not ? I'm ashamed of myself !

MADAME J. : Do you want me to have grand-children who won't call me Grandma ?

JOURDAIN : If they're Noble, they can call you anything they like.

MADAME J. : Do you want your daughter to come to see us, riding in a great carriage, her husband beside her—with his nose in the air ?

JOURDAIN : She can have *her* nose in the air, for all *I* care !

MADAME J. : I want a son-in-law I'm glad to see, and who'll be glad to see me. " Come in, my dear boy," I want to be able to say to him. " Come in ; make yourself at home ; sit down ; let me get you something to eat."

JOURDAIN : I don't want a son-in-law always hangin' about the place on the chance of a square meal ! I'm doing my best to rise ; but not always very well, I know that. But if I can't, my daughter shall. I want my girl to be someone I can look up to. And she shall be. She shall be a Marchioness ! Nothing more nor less—a Marchioness.

MADAME J. : God forbid !

JOURDAIN (*in a rage*) : And if you go on like that, I'll make it a Duchess—— (*And he lets out one of his stupendous yells.*) *Flunkeys ! ! !*

FIRST FLUNKEY (*appearing*) : Monsieur ?

SECOND FLUNKEY (*appearing*) : Monsieur wants something ?

JOURDAIN : Get out ! ! ! (*And he careers off between the astonished pair.*)

MADAME J. (*going after him*) : Husband !

LUCILLE (*after her*) : Mother !

NICOLE (*after her*) : Mistress !

FIRST FLUNKEY (*to the other*) : Mad !

SECOND FLUNKEY : Quite ! (*And, together, they stalk off. . . .*)

[*Covielle turns to his Master.*]

COVIELLE : A nice mess you've made of it !

CLÉONTE : Well—how could I help it ?

COVIELLE : Oh Master ! To take a man like that seriously. Those fellows were right—he's off his

rocker! You might have stretched a point—for all our sakes.

CLÉONTE: What could I have done? What else was I to say?

COVIELLE: You know, Master, I never knew your parents were tradespeople. You never told me. I think better of you!

CLÉONTE: Well . . . as a matter of fact—they weren't! My father was an Army officer; and my mother an officer's daughter. But I thought he'd *like* that bit about tradespeople. I thought it would make him feel less inferior. What I was worried about was that he'd say I hadn't enough money. So I made it sound as modest as I could, so he'd be surprised when he heard—but he never asked me. What are we to do now?

COVIELLE: Go home.

CLÉONTE: I can't go home.

COVIELLE: What are you going to do?

CLÉONTE (*sitting*): Stay here!

COVIELLE: You can't stay here.

CLÉONTE: How can I be anywhere else—when everything I love is here!

COVIELLE (*sitting himself too*): Oh, very well—have it your own way! . . .

[*So, then, for a few moments, the two young men, Master and Man, sit staring in front of them . . . then a change comes over each of their faces. . . . Cléonte's face grows longer and longer, till he sinks his head into his hands . . . while Covielle begins to grin . . . and the grin broadens and broadens until he breaks into a laugh.*]

CLÉONTE (*raising his head, in surprise*): What's all this? What is it? In heaven's name, what are you laughing at?

COVIELLE: I've thought of something!

CLÉONTE: Thought of *what?*
COVIELLE (*leaping up*): Oh Master! If we could! If we only could! And I don't see why not? I don't know why we shouldn't!
CLÉONTE: What *are* you talking about?
COVIELLE: We should all get what we want. *All* of us. You'd get Lucille; I'd get Nicole; and the old man 'ud get a lesson he'd never forget——
CLÉONTE: *Will* you tell me what you're jabbering about!
COVIELLE (*bursting into laughter*): Master! . . . Oh Master . . . the son of the Grand Turk, that's what you are—the Son and Heir of His Mightiness, the Lord of All the Turks!
CLÉONTE: God give me patience!
COVIELLE: Listen, Master—a few nights ago, there was a play, or a kind of a play—a Masquerade—at the Town Hall. I saw it; and went a-drinking, after, with the actors. A good lot—we could get their help; costumes and all——
CLÉONTE: But *will you tell me*——

[*Music starts.*]

COVIELLE: Yes, Master—as we go. But we must hurry. Follow. . . . Son of the Grand Turk!

[*And he runs off.*]

CLÉONTE (*running after him*): I'll give you Son of the Grand Turk!

[*Music swells up.*]

*Curtain*

# ACT THREE

*The same. It is evening. The candles in the room are alight. And a dining table has been placed in the centre of the room, richly set out for a dinner for three. . . .*

*Jourdain is practising his three bows. As he does so, the music fades to nothing, and the Two Flunkeys appear.*

FIRST FLUNKEY (*announcing*): His Excellency, the Count Dorante !——
SECOND FLUNKEY: ——and Friend !
JOURDAIN: I'm not ready for 'em ! Tell 'em, I'll be back in a moment !

[*And he makes a dash out of one door as the Count and the Marchioness Dorimene enter by another.*]

FIRST FLUNKEY: My Master will attend you——
SECOND FLUNKEY: ——shortly.
COUNT: Leave us.

[*The Flunkeys withdraw.*]

DORIMENE: Really, my dear Dorante, I can hardly believe my own behaviour. To allow you to bring me to a strange house, alone with you—where I don't even know the people who live here——
COUNT: And why should you ? They're of no account.
DORIMENE: Then why are we here ?
COUNT: You wouldn't allow me to entertain you as I wished, either in my house, or your own.
DORIMENE: I have a dislike of scandal——
COUNT: Exactly—so there was no alternative but the house of a stranger ; who is, fortunately, under an obligation to me, and where I can order things for you as you deserve.
DORIMENE: Really, Dorante—such persistence ! It's

almost magnificent—but a little alarming ! Attention after attention ! Present after present ! This morning, this diamond ring . . . it's beautiful . . . exquisite. . . . And now, this dinner . . . and, after dinner, some special entertainment just for the two of us. It's too much, my dear—the expenses you're incurring on my behalf place me under too great an obligation ; and, forgive me, but I know something of your circumstances ; you can't go on like this, without embarrassing yourself——

COUNT : Anything I can do for you is so much less than you deserve—there can be no question of obligation on your part, only of failure on mine.

DORIMENE : That tongue of yours ! I can no longer answer for myself. I'm getting into the habit of saying " Yes " I'm losing the power of saying " No "—I allow you to put a ring on my finger ; before I know where I am, you'll be hanging the chains of matrimony around my neck——

COUNT : And that's where they belong ! They'll suit you more perfectly than all the jewels in the world. . . . Oh, here comes the owner of the house. . . .

[*Jourdain enters, sees the Marchioness, and makes his first bow, as he was taught, retreating a few steps backwards. Then he stands regarding the distance between himself and the Marchioness.*]

JOURDAIN : Dear lady, if you'd move back a little, if you please——

DORIMENE : I beg your pardon ?

JOURDAIN : Just a few steps, please, if you'd be so good. I shan't have room for the last bow.

DORIMENE (*to the Count*) : This isn't, by any chance, a lunatic asylum ?

COUNT (*a passionate undertone to her*) : There's only one madman here—for love of you !

DORIMENE : Dorante !
JOURDAIN (*still standing some way off*) : If you please—you won't move, will you ?

[*And he approaches her, bowing elaborately three times, and ending up with his head at her knee—she regards him in bewildered amazement.*]

COUNT (*starting to protest*) : Monsieur——
JOURDAIN (*straightening up, and beginning, at once, to speak—and he won't be stopped*) : Dear lady, dear lovely lady, this is a very great honour for me to have the honour of such a great honour . . . that your Grace should be so gracious to bestow on me, so graciously, your graciousness . . . if only I had the merit to merit . . . such merit . . . oh dear, oh dear, heaven help me—but heaven itself is envious of my happiness ! If it would only grant me to be a little worthy . . . of such great . . . worthiness. . . .
COUNT (*breaking in*) : That's enough. The Marchioness doesn't like long compliments ; and she already knows your ready wit.
DORIMENE (*in the Count's ear*) : Is he sober ?
COUNT : Eccentric—and he's so delighted that I've hired his rooms for this evening—he's a little beside himself.
DORIMENE : This adventure becomes more fantastic every moment !
JOURDAIN (*to the Count*) : May I know what the Marchioness says ?
COUNT : She can hardly believe she's really in your house.
JOURDAIN : She's wearing my ring !
COUNT : SSSSSH ! (*He takes him a step or so aside.*) Good heavens, my dear man, you mustn't mention that !
JOURDAIN : No ?

COUNT : No, No, No ! That would be in the worst of taste. Indeed, if you want to behave like a gentleman. . . .
JOURDAIN : Of course, of course.
COUNT : You mustn't give so much as a hint that you gave her the ring ; on the contrary, you must make light of it ; even disparage it.
JOURDAIN : Is that so ?
COUNT : Yes. That's the really subtle approach. . . .
FIRST FLUNKEY (*entering*) : Dinner——
SECOND FLUNKEY (*entering*) : ——is served.
JOURDAIN : Ah ! . . . dear lady ! . . . (*And he approaches the Marchioness.*)
DORANTE (*intercepting him*) : Jourdain ! !
JOURDAIN : Eh ?
DORANTE : *Discretion*, my dear fellow—discretion ! Take your place at the table—leave her to me !

[*And a rather disheartened Jourdain makes his way to the dinner-table, and sits in a chair which the First Flunkey places for him.*]

DORIMENE (*seeing this*) : Is this person to dine with us ?
DORANTE : Knowing your desire for discretion, I thought you'd prefer it.
DORIMENE : Very thoughtful of you. I owe you something for that.

[*She moves to the table, where the Second Flunkey waits to place a chair for her ; and the First Flunkey is now ready with a chair for Dorante. As they seat them, Dorimene facing us with Dorante on her right, and Jourdain on her left, facing each other—Two Serving Maids bring on a little serving-table, which holds the food and wine ; and a Cook serves the food on to plates, which the Serving Maids give to the Flunkeys.*]

FIRST FLUNKEY (*placing a plate in front of Dorimene*): A Sturgeon from the Seine—à la Dorimene.
DORIMENE: Delicious! (*To the Count.*) But surely—a little extravagant!
JOURDAIN: Oh, dear lady, that's nothing—— What's a Sturgeon?—just a *fish!* What's the Seine?—just water!
DORIMENE (*amused*): ——and what's Dorimene?
JOURDAIN: Just perfect!
DORIMENE: Oh Monsieur!
SECOND FLUNKEY (*filling her glass*): With a roseate wine from Angevy.
DORIMENE: Perfect indeed! . . . (*To the Count.*) You see, Dorante, a starving woman, not made for abstinence and self-denial, and quite incapable of saying "No".
COUNT (*emotionally*): My dear!

[*He seizes one of her hands, and carries it to his lips. Jourdain, not to be outdone, seizes her other hand, but has not quite the courage to kiss it.*]

DORIMENE: Ah, Monsieur, you've noticed my ring.
JOURDAIN: Oh no, dear lady. No. Indeed, no.
DORIMENE (*showing it off*): A gift from one to whom I become more grateful every moment.
COUNT (*in ecstasy*): My dear!
JOURDAIN (*in equal ecstasy*): Oh dear, dear lady!
DORIMENE (*holding her hand with the ring up to his face*): What d'you think of it?
JOURDAIN: What do I think of it?
DORIMENE: Yes.
JOURDAIN: Dreadful! Quite dreadful! An eye-sore! I'm sorry your ladyship should feel obliged to wear such worthless trash!
DORIMENE (*staring at him in amazement*): Monsieur!
JOURDAIN (*goggling back at her*): Beautiful lady, I

hope I've said the right thing, and you're even more grateful. . . .

COUNT (*to distract her attention*) : My dear. . . .

[*She turns to him . . . and he raises his glass of roseate wine to her. She does the same ; and drinks.*]

DORIMENE : (*setting down her glass*) As lovely a wine as ever I tasted

JOURDAIN : But I can see something far lovelier !

DORIMENE : Really ! Monsieur is gallant.

JOURDAIN : Yes . . . yes . . . very—but I'm afraid I'm . . . er . . . a little afraid. But when you get to know me better, you'll be surprised.

DORIMENE : I've no doubt. This is an evening of surprises.

COUNT : And here's another——

[*The Music Master, the Young Composer and a Singer, enter. The Count continues as the new-comers group themselves round the spinet.*]

——Music, my dear, that I have had specially written for you, in your honour, by a young composer, whom I have discovered.

[*At the spinet the Composer strikes some chords.*]

JOURDAIN : What's this ? Are they going to *squawk* at us, while we're having dinner ?

COUNT : Monsieur—please ! . . . *please ! !*

JOURDAIN : Please—what ?

COUNT : The Marchioness would listen.

JOURDAIN : Oh . . . oh. . . .

[*He subsides ; and the song is sung.*]

Come, give me the cup that is charmed by thy hands,

That with wine and thy beauty all beauty excels ;
For with wine and thy love what more can life
give
To a man who in love would live ?

Then with Bacchus our guide shall we soar to
the heights,
And with him shall we savour celestial delights.

When caressed by thy lips see how sparkles the
wine,
And in touching thy lips makes it yet more
divine,
For together they'll conquer all pain and all
strife,
So give me thy love all my life.

Then with Bacchus our guide shall we soar to
the heights,
And with him shall we savour celestial delights.

DORIMENE : Delightful ! And how well performed and sung. (*To the Musicians.*) Oh, thank you, thank you . . . and all for me ! Too much ! Quite irresistible ! . . . Dorante, fill my glass with wine. *White* wine. White ! . . . It shall be my flag of surrender ! ! !

COUNT (*beside himself with joy, seizing her hand and kissing it*) : My dear, my dear !——

JOURDAIN (*not to be out-done—seizes the other hand and kisses it*) : My dear——

[*And so, they are—when Madame Jourdain sails in, followed by Nicole.*]

MADAME J. : So ! This is why I was packed off to my sister's ! Nice goings-on, as soon as my back's turned ! A banquet fit for the Lord Mayor ; and

musicians and singers swarming and sprawling all over my house.

[*The Musicians and Singer, Cooks and Serving Maids make off. The Flunkeys follow.*]

Good heavens, man, do you imagine your purse is as bottomless as the Royal Treasury?

COUNT: Really, Madame, you're very much mistaken——

MADAME J.: Oh, am I, am I?

COUNT: Indeed, yes. It's I who am entertaining this lady, not your husband.

JOURDAIN: That's right, not me.

COUNT: He has nothing to do with it.

JOURDAIN: Nothing at all.

COUNT: Except that I borrowed his house for the evening.

JOURDAIN: Yes—he borrowed the house.

COUNT: And I invited him to join us at dinner.

JOURDAIN: Did you hear that, you silly woman?

MADAME J.: And you expect me to believe it?

JOURDAIN: Believe it? Why not?

MADAME J.: A liar as well as a fool! Oh husband, husband! What are they doing to you? (*Suddenly she turns on Dorante.*) I must say, for a fine gentleman, you're doing finely with him. (*And then on Dorimene.*) And for a fine lady, it's a fine thing to come here, breaking up homes, and letting him think he's in love with you—at his time of life!

DORIMENE (*very angry, to Dorante*): Another surprise? If so, very ill-chosen; and not at all to my taste. (*She sweeps towards the door.*)

COUNT (*following*): Dorimene!

DORIMENE (*turning on him*): I shall return to my home. You will have the goodness not to follow me——

COUNT (*desperate*): But Dorimene!——

DORIMENE : And I wish you a very good evening ! (*She goes.*)
COUNT : No, No, No ! ! (*And after a hesitation, follows her.*)
JOURDAIN (*to Madame Jourdain*) : Now see what you've done—you wicked woman !
MADAME J. : Wicked ? Me ?
JOURDAIN : You ought to be ashamed of yourself !
MADAME J. : Ashamed !
JOURDAIN : Insulting everybody before everybody !
MADAME J. : I've no patience with you ! But they've gone, that's one thing—both of 'em. And what's more, we've seen the last of 'em. Nicole !
NICOLE : Madame ?
MADAME J. : Come with me.

[*And off she goes, followed by the girl. . . . Jourdain turns around, to find he is alone ; alone, with the richly laid dinner-table. He gives a very subdued call.*]

JOURDAIN : Flunkeys !
FIRST FLUNKEY (*entering ; also subdued*) : Monsieur ?
SECOND FLUNKEY (*entering*) : Monsieur wants something ?
JOURDAIN (*with a wave at the table*) : Take it away ! I can't bear the sight of it.

[*The Flunkeys remove the table.*]

Just when I was getting on so well, too. . . . I never said so many clever things, one after the other, in my life. . . .

[*He is now alone again. He sinks into a chair, utterly disconsolate—and then, behind him, Cléonte and Covielle appear ; strangely but quite plausibly disguised—they are both wearing a strange assortment of Eastern-looking garments ; Cléonte has a fine fierce black moustache, and*

*Covielle a beard. They tip-toe cautiously and noiselessly a few yards into the room. . . . They look at Jourdain, whose back is still to them . . . then, Covielle whispers into Cléonte's ear ; Cléonte nods and tip-toes out of the room again, leaving the bearded Covielle alone with Jourdain.*]

COVIELLE (*advancing a few steps towards Jourdain. Softly*): Monsieur Jourdain !

[*Jourdain looks up as if he had heard something, but wasn't quite certain. Covielle repeats.*]

COVIELLE (*louder*) : Monsieur Jourdain !

[*Jourdain screws himself round and sees Covielle.*]

JOURDAIN : Goodness gracious me ! !
COVIELLE (*with a low bow*) : *Good* Monsieur Jourdain !
JOURDAIN : In the name o' Goodness—who are *you ?*
COVIELLE : I can hardly suppose, dear Monsieur, that you recognise me.
JOURDAIN (*getting out of his chair, and approaching Covielle*) : Well, No. . . . No. . . . I can't say I do.
COVIELLE : And yet we have met before.
JOURDAIN : You don't say so !
COVIELLE : And to me it seems but a few minutes ago.
JOURDAIN : Bless my soul !
COVIELLE : I knew you when you were so big. (*His hands are scarce a foot apart.*)
JOURDAIN : So big ! . . . Oh ! . . . But that was some time ago !
COVIELLE : When you were a baby. And what a beautiful baby you were !
JOURDAIN : Was I ?
COVIELLE : All the ladies used to spoil you !
JOURDAIN : Did they ?
COVIELLE : They'd stoop down and lift you up——
JOURDAIN : Yes ! ——

COVIELLE : Take you in their arms——
JOURDAIN : Oh Yes !——
COVIELLE : Fondle you——
JOURDAIN : Ah !——
COVIELLE : And cover you with their kisses !
JOURDAIN : Oh what a disaster !—that we grow up !
COVIELLE : I knew your father !
JOURDAIN (*stiffening*) : . . . Oh !
COVIELLE : A fine gentleman !
JOURDAIN : . . . A *what ?*
COVIELLE : A fine gentleman.
JOURDAIN : . . . Did you know him well ?
COVIELLE : Very well——
JOURDAIN : Oh . . . well . . . of course . . . but all the same, y'know, there *are* people who say—you won't believe this ; this'll make you laugh, you'll laugh at this—there are people who say that he wasn't a gentleman at all—just a tradesman . . . an ordinary shop-keeper . . . a common clothier !
COVIELLE : Oh, Monsieur Jourdain ! How *can* you ! Your father was . . . er . . .
JOURDAIN : Yes ?
COVIELLE : Your father was . . . how can I express it . . . he was a great lover of cloth . . . of course, Yes . . . he had a passion for it ; cloth of all kinds. When he saw any, he bought it ; in vast quantities . . . and gave it to his friends in return for money.
JOURDAIN (*uncertain*) : To his friends ?
COVIELLE : Well, of course—anybody who wanted his cloth, he counted as a friend.
JOURDAIN : And he was a gentleman ?
COVIELLE : Most certainly.
JOURDAIN : And you'll stick to that. I mean, if you were asked, you'd repeat he was a fine gentleman.
COVIELLE : But of course.
JOURDAIN (*running at him, and grasping his hand*) : Oh,

my dear friend, my *dear* old friend—I may call you that; we've known each other for so many years—now, tell me, what is it? Is there anything I can do for *you?*

COVIELLE: Well, Monsieur Jourdain, since knowing your father, I have travelled a great deal——

JOURDAIN: Travelled?

COVIELLE: All round the world, in fact——

JOURDAIN: Quite a distance.

COVIELLE: And have only recently returned to France . . . the reason for my coming to you now, good Monsieur, might seem, to a lesser mind, a little strange. *Most* strange, in fact. Utterly unexpected—even fantastic . . . but we know very well, good Monsieur, that with People of Quality and Distinction, their lives are made up of the strange, the unexpected and the fantastic.

JOURDAIN: How true, how true.

COVIELLE: You know, of course, that the Son and Heir of His Royal Mightiness the All-Highest Lord of all the Turks—ahem—is now in Paris.

JOURDAIN: Is he now?

COVIELLE: You didn't know it?

JOURDAIN: Well, as a matter of fact, to tell you the truth—No, I didn't.

COVIELLE: Oh yes, he's here with a large following of his Royal Household. And all the Best People have been visiting him, and inviting him to their homes. I'm surprised you didn't know.

JOURDAIN: I may have done. I may have done—but for the moment it slipped my memory.

COVIELLE: Now it so happens that the Son of His Royal Mightiness is a friend of mine.

JOURDAIN: A friend?

COVIELLE: Oh, a great friend—I stayed with him

when I was in Turkey, in one of his many Palaces——

JOURDAIN: In *one* of them?

COVIELLE: Yes . . . one at a time . . . now, only yesterday, I was talking to him—in private of course—he'd asked me to stay after the others had gone; and he said to me . . . now this is going to surprise *you!*——

JOURDAIN: Oh No!

COVIELLE: No?

JOURDAIN: No. The Unexpected, you know—it's what I expect!

COVIELLE: Oh yes, of course. . . . Well, this is what he said . . . he said: "Accriam croc sola, ouch ouch, ala bala boola—bong foo. . . ." Would you *believe* it? *Amazing*, isn't it?

[*Jourdain is staring at him, open-mouthed.*]

. . . You don't get it? You've missed the point?

JOURDAIN: . . . that was Turkish?

COVIELLE: Of course.

JOURDAIN: I'm afraid my Turkish isn't what it was——

COVIELLE: Oh, of course. How stupid of me! Thoughtless! I should have realised—His Highness asked me if I knew of a very great gentleman in Paris named Jourdain, who had a very beautiful daughter.

JOURDAIN: He asked that?

COVIELLE: And then he added: "Mara-baba mara-baba tic toc blim blam hoo-ba; hoo-ba hoo-ba blim blam bif." What d'you make of *that?* . . . I thought that'ud take your breath away! I thought that'ud leave you speechless . . . and if you could have *heard* him! The way he said it: "hoo-ba hoo-ba blim blam bif." With such exaltation, such an ecstasy, and such passion . . . and, of course, it may very well alter the whole course of your life!

JOURDAIN : May it ?
COVIELLE : Well—isn't it *obvious?* You must see that !——
JOURDAIN (*in some exasperation*) : My dear fellow, I've told you, my Turkish is . . . er . . . a bit rusty !
COVIELLE : Oh, I'm sorry, I'm sorry—it slips so easily off my tongue, I keep forgetting. What he said was this. . . . About your daughter . . . "I love her ; I love her passionately ; I love her beyond endurance. I must have her."
JOURDAIN : Good God !
COVIELLE : In short, good Monsieur, he has sent me to ask you for her hand in marriage.
JOURDAIN : Marriage !
COVIELLE : The Son of the All-Highest Mightiness has but one desire—to call you father !
JOURDAIN : *Me ?* Father ? Good heavens ! ! This is almost more unexpected than I expected !
COVIELLE : I was afraid of it !
JOURDAIN : Afraid of what ?——
COVIELLE : That it would be too much for you ; that you'd be unable to measure yourself against this great opportunity.
JOURDAIN : Don't talk nonsense ! Measure myself against anything.
COVIELLE : Splendid ! Then, first, it's necessary—according to an old Turkish Custom—that you should become a Mamamouchie.
JOURDAIN : Become a what ?
COVIELLE : Mamamouchie. The highest rank in all Turkey . . . like being a Duke in France.
JOURDAIN : A Duke ! Oh, quickly, my dear friend, quickly, take me to the Son of the Almighty Great Turk !
COVIELLE : No need ; he's coming here.
JOURDAIN : Here !

COVIELLE: He's on his way.
JOURDAIN: He doesn't lose much time.
COVIELLE: His passion brooks no delay. And he's coming with all his Household, so that both ceremonies can be performed, and now at once.

[*In the distance the soft rhythmic beating of a drum—perhaps the clash of a cymbal and a murmur of voices.*]

JOURDAIN (*in a panic*): Oh heavens! Oh dear, oh dear—there's something I've forgotten.
COVIELLE: What?
JOURDAIN: My daughter!!
COVIELLE: Your daughter?
JOURDAIN: What'll become of her?
COVIELLE: My good Monsieur, the wedding will be in Turkish to be sure, but, after that, the procedure is much the same all the world over.
JOURDAIN: It won't be as easy as all that. She's an obstinate girl. Very. She thinks she's in love with somebody else—she'll have none of the Turk.
COVIELLE: Don't you worry about that. You don't know the Turk.
JOURDAIN: You don't know my daughter.
COVIELLE: SSSH!

[*The "Household" appears. Some dozen or fifteen of them. They are a company of amateur actors, now pretending with an immense and elaborate enthusiasm. . . . There ia a "Mufti", who is a very superior person; dancing girls; musicians; and Cléonte's personal body-guard, got up as Dervishes, very fierce, and carrying among other weapons swords with flat broad blades. The black-moustached Cléonte appears.*]

JOURDAIN (*in a hoarse whisper*): Is that him?
COVIELLE: That's His Highness!

[*Jourdain starts off towards Cléonte, but Covielle stops him.*]

Good heavens, man ! You mustn't approach a Highness, till a Highness approaches you.

JOURDAIN : I was going to welcome him.

COVIELLE : Madness !

JOURDAIN : Why ?

COVIELLE : I shudder to think what would have happened !

JOURDAIN : Well—what ?

COVIELLE : Death.

JOURDAIN : Eh ?

COVIELLE : A horrible death—they can be terrible, these Turks ! Gentle as doves if they get what they want ; but if you cross them, they'd kill you as soon as look at you.

JOURDAIN : Good gracious me ! P'raps I shouldn't have invited him.

COVIELLE : You didn't. He came uninvited——

JOURDAIN : That's true——

COVIELLE : Here he comes !

[*Cléonte approaches.*]

COVIELLE (*to Jourdain*) : Careful now, careful—for all our sakes ! Agree to everything he wants.

CLÉONTE (*reaching Jourdain. In a kind of greeting*) : Halva ! Ra-hat-la-Coom ! (*And he adds.*) Am-boo sabeen-a, salaam salaami boobah.

COVIELLE : His Highness says he hopes your heart blossoms, as the rose trees, all the year round.

JOURDAIN : Oh, thank you ; thank you very much—Yes, it does.

COVIELLE : It's a way they have of speaking.

JOURDAIN : Oh yes, yes ; I quite understand.

CLÉONTE : Oos-tin Cata-wiki—Bazum, Baza, Bazalla.

COVIELLE : He wishes you the Strength of a Lion and the Wisdom of a Serpent.
JOURDAIN : Oh thank you ; thank you very much—and the same to him !

[*At this point the musicians sound a few chords of music, and the Dancing Girls respond with rhythmic movements. Covielle is lost in such admiration of the way that "The Household" is playing its part that he watches—agape and forgetting.*]

CLÉONTE (*suddenly shouting at him*) : Hi-yah !
COVIELLE (*startled*) : Eh ?
CLÉONTE (*repeating*) : Hi-yah ! Hi-yah ! (*Then, out of the corner of his mouth, and under his breath.*) Get on with it !
COVIELLE : He says the Ceremony to make you a Mamamouchie must start now, and then your daughter must be brought to him and he'll marry her.
JOURDAIN : All that in one word ?
COVIELLE : The Turkish language is like that. Are you ready ?
JOURDAIN : I'm not so sure. . . . Look here !——
COVIELLE : No good arguing now, you've gone too far.
CLÉONTE (*breaking in—to Covielle*) : Ala-ha-ma ?
COVIELLE : Yic.
CLÉONTE (*turning to the Mufti. Repeating*) : Ala-ha-ma?
MUFTI : Yoc. (*Then to the others.*) Ala-ha-ma Yic Yoc. Yic Yoc ala-ha-ma.
CLÉONTE (*as if starting the Ceremony*) : Ra-hat-la-Coom.
MUFTI (*repeating*) : Ra-hat-la-Coom.
ALL : Ra-hat-la-Coom.

[*They all begin to chant and sing, and move about in a kind of dance.*]

COVIELLE (*to Jourdain*) : There they go ! They're at it ! They've begun ! In a moment, they'll be coming for you.

JOURDAIN : Coming for me ?

COVIELLE : The Ceremony to make you a Mamamouchie.

JOURDAIN : Oh, yes.

COVIELLE : A kind of Ordeal !

JOURDAIN : A kind of *what ?*

COVIELLE : Nothing to worry about. I shouldn't be surprised if you survived. I've known quite a few who have—— Here they come.

[*Jourdain tries to bolt ; but Covielle stops him.*]

Steady, steady, steady. Courage ! It'll all be over now in a few moments—one way or the other——

[*Some of "The Household" come dancing and prancing towards Jourdain, surround him, seize hold of him, and half dance, half drag him into the centre of the stage . . . then they all move in a great circle round him, singing and dancing. . . . One of them carries a quite enormous book . . . and gives it, elaborately, to the Mufti. . . . At this point, Covielle breaks through the circle and goes close to Jourdain. The music and singing sinks almost into silence, while Covielle speaks to Jourdain, in a loud whisper.*]

COVIELLE : See that Book ? The Sayings of the First Mamamouchie. Very Sacred. They're going to read from it. When they do, you'll have to hold it ; and keep your eyes shut ; you mustn't see what's written. If you do, they'll put 'em out.

JOURDAIN : What out ?

COVIELLE : Your eyes. . . . Here it is ! Shut 'em !

[*Two of the household thrust the great book into Jourdain's arms—and there he stands, eyes tight shut and clasping it to*

*himself. For a moment they dance round him, and the music and singing become wilder . . . but at a sign from Cléonte, it sinks again to practically nothing.*]

COVIELLE: No, No, No—they want to read from it. You mustn't hold it like that—you must hold it out at arm's length.

JOURDAIN: I can't. It's heavy.

COVIELLE: If your body comes into contact with the Sacred Word, you must be purged with fire.

JOURDAIN (*opening his eyes, wide*): Eh?

COVIELLE: Shut your eyes. (*He does.*) Sometimes they skin 'em alive, but it comes to much the same thing.

[*Jourdain makes a gallant attempt to hold the great book out at arm's length. . . . The Mufti comes up to him and makes a pretence of reading out a few words . . . the rest of them repeat the words, in chorus, making a fine volume of sound . . . and Jourdain drops the book—— Immediately the singers stop; and there is a deathly silence. . . . They all retire from him, to the furthest limits of the room. Covielle runs up to Jourdain.*]

COVIELLE: Splendid! Well done! You couldn't have done better! You put it down at the exact moment. You must have an instinct for this sort of thing! You can open your eyes!—and you'll want 'em! Because all you've got to do, now, is to *watch*; and *not move!* Remember—whatever happens, don't move!!

[*The "Household", in a great half-circle round Jourdain, begin to sing in a kind of low murmur, like a great wind getting up; and as they begin to close in on him, their voices grow louder and their movements more violent. . . . Suddenly, the Mufti seems to go raving mad. He dances and leaps about in a frenzy.*]

MUFTI (*as one possessed*): Hoo la ba ba—chou la ba ba. Ying Yong Yip Yap—Yah Yah Yah!

[*And he rushes at Jourdain and makes a sweeping slash at him with his great curved sword. Jourdain leaps out of the way. The Mufti slashes again, and again, and Jourdain leaps this way and that. Then the Dervishes join in; and their weapons whirl round Jourdain's head and body. The rest sing and dance in the pattern of some wild Ceremonial—till Jourdain collapses on the floor from fright and exhaustion . . . immediately there is the same sudden cessation of sound and movement, and retirement.*]

COVIELLE (*running to Jourdain and helping him to his feet*): Again, again splendid! You knelt just when you should—how you know——It's a Miracle! Now for the last Test—and all you have to do is to *keep silent*. That's all. *Not a sound!! SSSSH!!!*

[*He puts his finger to his lips—for they are all closing in on Jourdain again; and all in utter silence; they all go on an elaborate tip-toe. The Mufti, like some stealthy great cat, creeps towards Jourdain; and taking hold of his two hands slowly bends him over. Behind them, the Dervishes are silently preparing their broad flat-bladed swords. Then, one of them, lifting his sword high, with the flat of it, gives Jourdain a tremendous whack on the back-side. Jourdain lets out a great bellow. The other two Dervishes do as the first, and at each whack, Jourdain lets out a bellow louder than the last. . . . Then Joy bursts forth! They all break into a great pæan of triumph.*]

MUFTI: Halva! Mamamouchie!
ALL: Halva! Halva!! Halva!!! Mamamouchie!!!
MUFTI: Yooo-Gert!
ALL: Noo-gah!
MUFTI: Hool-ah!

ALL : Bool-ah — Mama — Mama — Mouchie — Mamamouchie !

[*During this, they have put a great robe round Jourdain and a great turban on his head.*]

COVIELLE : It's over ! All over ! . . . Now come and sit down.
JOURDAIN : Sit down ? Must I ?

COVIELLE : But of course——

[*And he leads him to a great chair—all the others prostrate themselves before him—and when he has managed to seat himself, and looks round, eveybody in the room is flat on their faces.*]

JOURDAIN : What's all this ?
COVIELLE : Doing homage. You're a Mamamouchie! A Duke !
JOURDAIN (*suffused with a great pride*) : A Duke ! !
COVIELLE : *Well*, a kind of a Duke—a Turkish Duke.

[*At which point Madame Jourdain enters.*]

MADAME J. : Sakes alive—what's all this ?
JOURDAIN : Careful. Careful. Careful, what you say —I'm not what I was. I'm a Mamamouchie.
MADAME J. : A what ?
JOURDAIN : A Duke . . . well, a kind of a Duke. A Turkish Duke. I'm a kind of a Turk.
MADAME J. : That's what you'd like to be—you old sinner ! " A kind of a Turk " indeed—and have a whole lot of wives.
JOURDAIN : I never thought of that ! (*To Covielle.*) Can I ?
COVIELLE : What ?
JOURDAIN : Have a whole lot of wives ?
COVIELLE : As many as you please !

JOURDAIN: Bless my soul!—— Two'll do. . . .
COVIELLE: For a man in your position—utterly inadequate. You must have two dozen at least.
JOURDAIN: Two dozen!
COVIELLE: At least.
JOURDAIN: But—I'm not as young as I was.
COVIELLE: It'll give you new life.
JOURDAIN: If it doesn't finish me.
MADAME J.: What's that?
JOURDAIN: Nothing, my dear—domestic details.
MADAME J.: Who *are* these people?
JOURDAIN: Fellow-countrymen. Noble, too—— Not as noble as I am, of course—but quite noble . . . especially that one (*points to Cléonte*). He's a Highness.
MADAME J. (*regarding him closely, and not without anxiety*): You've never been as bad as this!
JOURDAIN: My dear, if you'd only *seen* the Ceremony. The way these fellows sing and dance and use their swords—most impressive. I found it most impressive!

[*Cléonte and his followers begin to raise themselves from the floor.*]

JOURDAIN (*noticing this; he is really very scared*): Hullo, what are they up to? Good fellows, y'know! Oh, splendid!—but you want to keep an eye on 'em!
CLÉONTE (*on his feet again; sudden and loud*): Hi-yah, hi-yah!—— Fizz, Fazz, Hi-yah!
COVIELLE (*to Jourdain*): You're to bring the girl here at once!
JOURDAIN: Oh dear—oh dear . . . look here, supposing she's obstinate . . . supposing she won't have anything to do with him—will there be any unpleasantness?
COVIELLE: Unpleasantness? What unpleasantness?

JOURDAIN : Well . . . just now, you said . . . you said something about Death !
COVIELLE : Oh no, no, no ; certainly not ; nothing like that.
JOURDAIN : I'm glad to hear it——
COVIELLE : But there are worse fates than death !——
JOURDAIN : What d'you mean by *that ?*
CLÉONTE (*with great menace*) : Zim Zam Cara-bama.
COVIELLE (*in horror*) : Oh No, you couldn't ! You couldn't do *that* to him ! !
CLÉONTE : *Yic !*
COVIELLE : Ŷoc !
CLÉONTE : *YIC ! !*
COVIELLE : Oh ! ! . . . (*To Jourdain.*) Fetch her ! Quickly. Quickly—you don't know what you're risking !
JOURDAIN : I'll do my best. (*And he turns to go.*)
MADAME J. : Here, come back ! I don't want to be left alone with 'em——

[*But he has gone. She stands hesitating—and both Cléonte and Covielle, forgetting their disguises, make a rush at her—one from each side.*]

COVIELLE : } Oh Madame !
CLÉONTE : } Dear, dear Madame Jourdain !

[*She gives a piercing shriek, and rushes from the room. . . . The two young men are left, face to face.*]

CLÉONTE : Idiot ! What did you want to frighten her away for ?
COVIELLE : I didn't, Master ! It was *you !*
CLÉONTE : Ŷou should have explained. . . .
COVIELLE : I was going to. . . .
CLÉONTE : Well, when she comes back—can you take that beard off ?

[*Covielle pulls the beard, which is on an elastic, away from his face. Cléonte continues.*]

Yes. Do that—and explain. Is the Notary coming ?
COVIELLE : He's here.
CLÉONTE : Here ?
COVIELLE (*indicating the "Mufti"*) : This gentleman is a Notary.
CLÉONTE : He can marry us ?
COVIELLE : Yes.
CLÉONTE : Oh, Covielle !
COVIELLE : Oh, Master !

[*And they both begin to laugh. The "Household", now very much relaxed, begins to laugh too. Cléonte starts to address them.*]

CLÉONTE : My friends ! My good friends !——

[*But he breaks off as the beautiful Dorimene sweeps on to the stage, followed by Count Dorante.*]

DORIMENE (*turning on him*) : Dorante ! These presents must stop ! I reached home to find I could hardly get into my house for the flowers you had sent me . . . and then your message that there was yet another entertainment for me here. . . . (*She regards the "Household".*) I suppose this is it. Ridiculous extravagance ! I'm very angry.
DORANTE : And when you're angry, you look lovelier than ever ; and, if possible, I love you even more——
DORIMENE : Which makes me angrier——
DORANTE : And more beautiful.
DORIMENE (*stamping her foot*) : Ah ! It must stop ! D'you hear ? These presents must stop !
DORANTE : Impossible, my dear ! Your beauty is a magnet that attracts them. There is no way of stopping them.

DORIMENE : There is a way.
DORANTE : Indeed.
DORIMENE : And I shall take it.
DORANTE : It will be in vain.
DORIMENE : I shall marry you.
DORANTE (*utterly shattered*) : . . . You'll. . . .
DORIMENE : And when we're married, the presents will, certainly, stop, which will, probably, make me even more angry, so you may go on loving me—perhaps.
DORANTE : You mean this ?
DORIMENE : I do. For I'm a great fool ; and you're another . . . and I'm very happy.
DORANTE : Oh, my dear !

[*And, dropping on to one knee, and seizing her hand, he covers it with kisses. . . . Meanwhile, Cléonte, Covielle and the Mufti have been consulting together. Now they approach Dorante.*]

CLÉONTE : Good Monsieur !
DORANTE : Eh ! What's this ? (*He rises.*)
CLÉONTE : We want your help.
COVIELLE (*to Dorimene*) : And yours, sweet lady.
DORIMENE : My help ? In what ?

[*For answer, Covielle, standing in front of Dorimene, suddenly pulls his beard away from his face . . . and lets it fly back into place. Dorimene gives a little scream of surprise.*]

CLÉONTE (*to Dorante; indicating his own make-up*) : It's false . . . can't you see ? . . . look close. . . . I'm Cléonte.
DORANTE : Cléonte ?
CLÉONTE : Yes, you know me.
DORANTE (*looking close*) : Why, of course ! I know you—yes. I've seen you here, often ; and if I'm not

mistaken, in company with the old man's daughter.
CLÉONTE : We're playing a trick on him.
COVIELLE : So that we can both get married.
CLÉONTE : He thinks we've made him a great Turkish Noble.
COVIELLE : And he's marrying his daughter to the son of the Grand Turk.
CLÉONTE : These good friends helped—they recently acted in such a comedy.
COVIELLE : My idea.
DORIMENE : Here ehe comes !
CLÉONTE : You won't give us away ?
DORANTE : Indeed, no——
DORIMENE : We'll help !——

[*Jourdain has entered and is coming towards them.*]

DORANTÉ (*with a deep bow*) : Dear Monsieur, we have only just heard of your great honour ; and hasten to offer our congratulations.
JOURDAIN : Oh thank you, thank you—thank you very much. . . . I wish you the Courage of a Serpent, and the Wisdom of a Lion.
DORIMENE (*dropping him a curtsy*) : And our homage.
JOURDAIN : Homage ! Oh, dear lady, this is too much . . . er . . . er . . . may the roses in your garden bloom all the year round !
DORANTE : And we hear your daughter is to marry the Son of the Grand Turk.
JOURDAIN : Well, I haven't told her yet ! She'll be here in a moment—you think it's a good idea ?
DORIMENE : But, of course——
JOURDAIN : For the girl herself, for my daughter, you think it's a good thing ?
DORIMENE : I count her the happiest and most fortunate girl in France.
JOURDAIN : I'm relieved to hear it. Immensely

relieved. Thank you for saying it. And thank you, dear lady, for coming back. I wanted to apologise for my wife.

DORIMENE: No need! I understand now how precious you must be to her. And a woman is only unreasonable and jealous over those things she holds most dear.

JOURDAIN: Yes, yes, indeed—there's something in that! And talking of my wife . . . and . . . er . . . of *wives*, in general—and, speaking as a Turk . . . I'm now in a position to make you a proposal.

DORIMENE: A proposal?

JOURDAIN (*under his breath to her*): Of marriage.

DORIMENE: Marriage!

JOURDAIN: Oh yes, of course, of course . . . strictly honourable . . . only, as a Turk, if you know what I mean, that's about as far as I want to go. Just you—and the one I've got now.

[*Dorimene stares at him, in bewilderment.*]

DORANTE (*breaking in*): My dear Monsieur, we should very much like, with your permission, to be presented to his Royal Highness.

DORIMENE: We knew, of course, that he was in Paris; but we haven't yet had the opportunity of paying our respects.

JOURDAIN: Of course . . . now, where is that interpreter. . . . Confound the feller! Never here when he's wanted. Never mind, I'll do it myself. . . . Ahem, ahem . . . Your Highness. . . . May I have the honour to . . . to have the honour . . . to——

DORANTE (*helping him*): "present"—and the lady first.

JOURDAIN: Oh yes . . . to present . . . er . . . . The

Marchioness Dorimene and his Excellency Count Dorante. . . .

[*Cléonte puts on the blankest of expressions and just stares at him. Jourdain continues.*]

Devil take it! He doesn't understand a word I'm saying . . . er . . . this lady . . . *great* lady . . . this gentleman . . . *great* gentleman. . . . (*Cléonte continues to stare.*) No good. Try again . . . er . . . Monsieur here, Grande-de Seignore . . . er . . . Lady here, Grand-da Dama (*by this time he is shouting. He repeats.*) *Grand-da Dama!*

[*Cléonte cannot contain a little burst of laughter, which he covers up with a bow.*]

Ah, that's better! Now we're getting somewhere—Monsieur here, French Mamamouchie . . . Madame here, French Mamamouchette.

[*They all bow. Covielle runs up, and joins in the bowing.*]

Oh, you've turned up! Tell His Highness that these are two very old friends of mine—and People of Great Distinction and Quality. . . . Oh, there's my daughter!

[*Lucille has appeared in the doorway; and he goes to her.*]

(*Taking her by the hand, and leading her into the room.*) Come along, my dear! Come along!

[*He brings her towards Cléonte . . . then halts, and lets go her hand. He is in a state of acute nervous excitement.*]

JOURDAIN: My dear . . . I . . . I want to present to you . . . er . . . a friend of mine—a new friend, but a very special one—Yes . . . ahem . . . His Royal Highness, the Son of His Grand Mightiness, the Lord of all the Turks.

[*Lucille stands there, quite bewildered . . . she looks, in silence, at Cléonte . . . from him, to "The Household" . . . from them to her father . . . and from him, turns her head towards Dorante and Dorimene.*]

DORANTE : If I may be allowed to put in a word, may I say that I understand your bewilderment ; but I should like to reassure you that His Highness is well-known to me.

DORIMENE : And if I may venture a word of advice, you will do well, dear girl, to fall in with your father's plan ; and agree to everything he suggests.

JOURDAIN (*Lucille's continued silence is working him more and more into a state*) : Oh daughter, daughter ! ——You can count yourself the happiest, the most fortunate lady in the whole of France . . . now listen . . . listen . . . His Highness came this afternoon to call upon me, here, with all his household . . . to . . . to . . . to ask for your hand in marriage. . . .

LUCILLE (*after a silence*) : . . . marriage ?

JOURDAIN : Yes.

LUCILLE (*still quietly and after another silence*) : . . . and what did you say ?

JOURDAIN : Well . . . I said that you . . . that I . . . that we—I said yes. . . .

LUCILLE : You said yes ?

JOURDAIN : Yes.

LUCILLE : So ! . . . So ! . . . as if I were some dead or senseless thing about your house ! . . . a picture, a carpet—or a rug—you hand me over ! Dispose of me ! Some trinket that you've tired of—give me away ! And to a stranger, and a foreigner.

JOURDAIN : No, No—a Prince. You'd be a Princess ; and I the father of a Prince.

LUCILLE : If he were twenty times a prince I'd never

marry him. I'll marry no man but the man I love. I'll marry none but Cléonte!

CLÉONTE (*giving a great shout of triumph*): *AH!!!*

[*Which frightens Jourdain out of his wits, and he gives an equally loud shout of terror.*]

JOURDAIN: *AH!!!*

LUCILLE: You can't make me! No one can make me! Nothing can make me!

JOURDAIN (*turning away to Dorante and Dorimene*): There you are! I knew what it would be. She's quite right. Nothing can make her. The devil himself couldn't!—— (*And he flops himself down on a seat, sinking his head in his hands.*)

[*But no sooner is Jourdain's back turned than Covielle, running in front of Lucille, pulls his beard away from his face. Lucille gives a gasp of surprise; but recognising Covielle, recognises Cléonte . . . very demurely she returns to her father's side and touches his arm.*]

LUCILLE: Father!

JOURDAIN (*grunting at her, without looking up*): Um?

LUCILLE: Forgive me!

JOURDAIN (*looking up*): Eh?

LUCILLE: I had forgotten——

JOURDAIN: Forgotten what?

LUCILLE: My duty, as a daughter—to you, my father——

JOURDAIN: What *are* you talking about?

LUCILLE: If this fellow wants me, then I'll marry him.

JOURDAIN: Yes . . . but——

[*Madame Jourdain enters.*]

MADAME J. (*speaking as she appears*): What's this I

hear? You want to marry my daughter to a heathen Turk?

JOURDAIN: Oh, must you always turn up at the wrong moment, and say the wrong thing?

MADAME J.: And must you go from folly to wickedness?

DORIMENE: But, Madame, your daughter has already agreed.

MADAME J.: And if she has, doubtless it's *your* doing——

LUCILLE: But *Mother!*

MADAME J.: Out of my sight, baggage!

COVIELLE (*coming to one side of Madame Jourdain, and whispering*): But Madame!——

MADAME J.: Don't you come near me you Heathen Savage.

CLÉONTE (*coming to her other side, and whispering in her other ear*): *Dear* Madame!

MADAME J.: Nor you!

COVIELLE: Listen!

CLÉONTE: You'll change your mind.

MADAME J.: Me! Change my mind! What d'you take me for? Never, never, never!

JOURDAIN (*turning away*): Worse than her daughter! She'll never change—never, never, never!

[*But the moment Jourdain's back is turned Covielle pulls his beard away from his face. Madame Jourdain takes one astonished look; pulls his beard for herself to make sure; turns her head to scrutinise Cléonte's face; and walks immediately to her husband.*]

MADAME J.: It's all right, dear husband—I've changed my mind!

JOURDAIN: Eh?

MADAME J.: I've changed my mind!

JOURDAIN (*utterly mystified*): These Turks!!!

COVIELLE (*coming to Jourdain*) : His Highness says the marriage is to take place.

[*Jourdain is too dazed to answer. Madame Jourdain does so.*]

MADAME J. : I agree.
COVIELLE : His Mufti will conduct the ceremony.
DORIMENE (*to Madame Jourdain*) : And that you should never again have the slightest cause for jealousy, I will use this happy occasion to be joined to this fellow here.
MADAME J. : I agree to that too.
JOURDAIN (*to Dorante*) : What's this ?
DORANTE (*to Jourdain*) : Her suggestion ; a mere formality ; put people off the scent !
JOURDAIN : Oh ! . . . Yes . . . very good !

[*Nicole bursts in.*]

NICOLE : What's all this ? (*And she sees through their disguises.*) Why ! If it isn't——
CLÉONTE (*shouting to drown her voice*) : Aca-Bama.
COVIELLE (*ditto*) : Gum shoo !
CLÉONTE : *HOOSH ! ! !*

[*Nicole takes one look at them ; roars with laughter ; and, throwing her arms round Covielle, gives him an enormous kiss.*]

JOURDAIN : Did you see that ! The hussy ! If she wants to go on like that—shameless—she'd better marry the fellow ! So !—I give my daughter to the Prince, my maid to the Interpreter, and my wife to anyone who wants her.
MADAME J. : Suppose I prefer you ?
JOURDAIN : You might do worse !—— And I must say you've been remarkably sensible over this affair.

I never thought you'd change about anything. This is at least a beginning, my dear—a beginning——

[*He breaks into a laugh ; and then they all begin to laugh. The laughter grows. Bewildered, Jourdain looks round ; and for the moment, leaves his wife. . . . But she holds out her arms to him, and moving back to her, he kisses her. Whereupon, Cléonte kisses Lucille, Covielle kisses Nicole, Dorante kisses Dorimene . . . and the Curtain comes down.*]

# THE SAME SKY

*by*

*YVONNE MITCHELL*

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*Applications for performance of this play by amateurs should be made to Evans Bros. Ltd., Montague House, Russell Square, London, W.C.1. Enquiries for repertory and professional performances should be made to M.C.A. (Great Britain), Ltd., at 35 Dover Street, W.1. No performance may take place unless permission has been obtained.*

*The Same Sky*, originally called *Here Choose I*, was presented at the Nottingham Playhouse on February 19, 1951, with the following cast :

| | |
|---|---|
| ESTHER BRODSKY | *Ursula O'Leary* |
| MANNY BRODSKY | *John Morton* |
| GEORGE SMITH | *Raymond Smith* |
| MOMMA BRODSKY | *Golda Casimir* |
| POPPA BRODSKY | *John Dearth* |
| REENY BRODSKY | *Betty Lucas* |
| SAMMY | *Leon Gluckman* |
| JEFF SMITH | *Robert Cartland* |
| A YOUNG PORTER | *Haydn Jones* |
| AN OLD WOMAN | *Ann Prime* |

Produced by André van Gyseghem

Settings by Anthony Waller

Tennent Productions Limited presented *The Same Sky* on January 31, 1952, at the Lyric Theatre, Hammersmith, with the following cast :

| | |
|---|---|
| ESTHER BRODSKY | *Frances Hyland* |
| MANNY BRODSKY | *Alaric Cotter* |
| GEORGE SMITH | *Robert Dickens* |
| MOMMA BRODSKY | *Thora Hird* |
| POPPA BRODSKY | *Frederick Valk* |
| REENY BRODSKY | *Joy Rodgers* |
| DOREEN, a friend | *Betty MacDowall* |
| SAMMY | *John Garley* |
| JEFF SMITH | *Eric Porter* |
| A PORTER | *Bertram Shuttleworth* |
| AN OLD WOMAN | *Daphne Newton* |

Produced by Daphne Rye

Settings by Gurschner and Stanley Moore

The play was transferred to the Duke of York's Theatre on March 18, when Vernon Greeves appeared as Jeff, Peter Hutton as Sammy, and Margaret St. Barbe West as an Old Woman.

# CHARACTERS

POPPA BRODSKY
MOMMA BRODSKY
ESTHER
REENY
MANNY
} *Their Children* 13
JEFF SMITH
GEORGE SMITH 13
SAMMY
A PORTER
AN OLD WOMAN
DOREEN, *Reeny's girl-friend*

# ACT ONE

*The stage is divided into 3 parts. The largest portion shows the Brodskys' living room in the East End of London. With it is seen a corner of the street outside. When these are in darkness, the stairs of a tube station can be seen dimly lit.*

*Scene: The living room and street. October, 1940. 5 p.m.*

*The room is in darkness. No street lamps are lit. In the distance two dogs are having a barking match, and a man is calling an evening newspaper.*

*Esther enters from the street, lets herself in with a key, hangs up her coat, and exits to a tiny bedroom where the family sleeps.*

*Presently, round the street corner come two boys, fighting; Manny Brodsky and George Smith, both aged 13. Apart from grunts and scuffles only indistinguishable half words are heard. After rolling in the street they scuffle and kick against the door. Esther enters from the bedroom.*

ESTHER : What on earth. . . . (*Turns on light then opens front door.*) Manny ! (*Tries to separate them.*) Stop it ! Will you stop it ! Hooligans ! Manny !
MANNY : Don't touch him, Esther, he's not one of Us.

[*George wipes a bleeding nose on his cuff.*]

ESTHER : You've hurt him, Manny.
GEORGE : I hurt him too.
MANNY : No you didn't. You couldn't hurt me.
ESTHER : Be quiet, both of you. What's your name ?
MANNY : George Smith. He's Jeff's brother.
ESTHER : Jeff's brother ? (*Pause.*) Why were you fighting ?

[*George whistles a tune unconcernedly.*]

Tell me why you were fighting, Manny.

[*Pause.*]

MANNY : He called me a dirty Jew.
GEORGE : So he is. A dirty Jew.
MANNY : So I called him a goddam Goy, and kicked him. I started it.
GEORGE (*indignant*) : No you didn't. I started it by calling you a dirty Jew.
MANNY (*fierce*) : I started the kicking though.
ESTHER : Go on in, Manny.
MANNY : I haven't finished with him yet.
ESTHER : Go on in and wipe your face before Momma sees you.

[*Manny goes in and rubs his face on a towel. Fills kettle and puts it on range.*]

(*Meanwhile.*) Your brother's home on leave, isn't he ?
GEORGE : So what ?
ESTHER : He doesn't call people dirty Jews.
GEORGE : Ha ! Ha ! He wouldn't at the moment 'cos he's sweet on you. But my Mum does. How would you like to have dirty Jews sitting next to you in class. My Mum says she won't have nothing more to do with Jeff if he marries you.

[*Esther goes indoors, shuts the door quietly and begins to lay the table.*]

ESTHER : Put the kettle on, Manny, will you ?
MANNY : It's on.
GEORGE (*shouts at door*) : My Mum says she don't want her grandchildren to be dirty Jews. She says it's bad enough having to live in the same street let alone the same house.

[*George exit up street.*]

MANNY : You see, Esther ?

ESTHER : No.
MANNY (*shrugs*) : You can't argue with them. (*Helps her lay up.*)
ESTHER : I don't think kicking's any better.
MANNY : Well, what else can you do to fight prejudice?
ESTHER : Fight it in yourself ; no, don't lay up for me, I'm going out.
MANNY : But I'm not prejudiced ; it's George.
ESTHER : He doesn't like you because you're Yiddisher, and you don't like him because he's not. Where's the difference ?
MANNY (*takes a handful of crayons from his pocket*) : Have you got a bit of paper ?
ESTHER : You can take a bit from the back of the accounts book.

[*She goes to the sink and washes her hands and arms with water from the kettle. Manny tears a page from the accounts book and sits at table to draw. Long pause.*]

MANNY (*drawing*) : Were you going to marry Jeff, then ?
ESTHER : Who said anything about it ?
MANNY : Jeff seems to have. Would you marry a Goy, Esther ?
ESTHER : Isn't a good man a good man, no matter if his parents were Jewish or not ?

[*Pause.*]

MANNY : If you want to marry Jeff I'm all for you. Even if he was a *German.* Will you sit down a moment, I want to draw you.
ESTHER : Another time, or I'll be late.
MANNY : I'm doing a picture of hate. And I'm going to put you in the middle, not hating.
ESTHER : Could you do me to-morrow ?

MANNY : All right. The hate will take me some time anyway. I'll be looking at you and then I might be able to do you from memory when you've gone. Going dancing ?

ESTHER : No, the theatre.

MANNY : The Yiddish Players ? What's on then ?

ESTHER : *The Merchant of Venice.*

MANNY : Does Jeff like Shakespeare too, then ?

ESTHER : I don't know. He hasn't seen one yet.

MANNY : I wish I could go. We did a bit of *The Tempest* at school. And the words are amazing. (*Quotes.*) " Sometimes a thousand twangling instruments delight mine ears." Just imagine, a *thousand* twangling instruments, what it would sound like. It doesn't come from an orchestra, just sounds in the air. On the island where they are. Just imagine it.

ESTHER : Oh, I never asked you, how was the half-term exam ?

MANNY (*despondent*) : I was top.

ESTHER : That's wonderful.

MANNY : No it's not. I think that's what started it.

ESTHER : Started what ?

MANNY : Me and George fighting. We were told the marks at the end of school, and he came straight out of the room and said that to me.

ESTHER : I don't expect that was the reason. There are plenty of people get called dirty Jews without being top of the class. (*Going off to change blouse.*)

MANNY (*calls*) : Esther ?

ESTHER (*off*) : What ?

MANNY : I can see that to think Christians are no good is a prejudice, but what about religion ?

ESTHER (*off*) : What ?

MANNY : I mean is it religious all right to marry a Goy ?

ESTHER : I think so.

MANNY : Poppa wouldn't think so. He'd think God would be furious. Don't you ?
ESTHER : No.
MANNY : Then I think you should marry him no matter what anybody on earth thinks. Even Momma. Why isn't she home ?
ESTHER : I expect she's round at the shop helping Poppa.

[*Esther enters in a new blouse.*]

Let's put up the blackout before they come.
MANNY (*goes on drawing*) : What'll you do if the sirens go when you're in the theatre ?
ESTHER : We'll go to a shelter or down the tube. I'll be all right. Tell Momma not to expect me in our shelter, so as she won't worry.
MANNY : Supposing the play was very exciting and then the sirens went ; would you stay ?
ESTHER : I might want to, but Jeff wouldn't let me.
MANNY : I can trust you with Jeff then ?
ESTHER : I promise. Wouldn't this cardboard be good for chalking on ?
MANNY : What ? But I couldn't. We have to have it for blackout.
ESTHER : We could still put it up. You could do a sketch on the bit of paper, and then do it big and proper on here after.
MANNY (*excited*) : Yes ! D'you think Momma would mind ?
ESTHER : I think she'd love it. It would brighten up the room and she loves bright colours.
MANNY : I could do a real size picture. A real size picture. I could do all sorts of things.

[*Simultaneously with Manny's last speech Momma and Poppa come round the street corner, their arms full of suits.*

*Momma is saying, " Not to worry looking for the key. The children will be in. Wait, I do it." Bangs the knocker. Esther opens the door. The next remarks are simultaneous.*]

MOMMA : Good. Put them on the chair. After supper we can do them.

MANNY : Hallo, Momma, hallo, Poppa. (*Kisses them.*) We were just doing the blackout and Esther said could I. . . .

MOMMA : That's good.

[*Esther kisses them.*]

And they've laid up too. Poppa was late so we bring the work home. It's getting dark.

POPPA : Shut the door, Manny.

ESTHER : Oh, what a lot to do. Must it all be done to-night ?

POPPA : How's school, Manny ?

MANNY : O.K. Momma, do you. . . .

MOMMA : You get half-term marks ?

MANNY : Yes. Do you think. . . .

MOMMA : Not good ?

MANNY : I was top.

POPPA : Ah, so.

MOMMA : Good. That's very good. Esther love, you going out ?

MANNY : She's going to see *The Merchant of Venice*, and, Momma, do you think I could use. . . .

MOMMA : Who you going with, darling ?

ESTHER : I'm going with Jeff, Momma.

MOMMA (*pinches Esther's cheek affectionately*) : Ach, why don't you go with some nice Yiddisher boy, hm ?

MANNY : She'll be all right with Jeff, he won't let her stay in the theatre if the sirens go. He'll take her to a shelter or down the tube.

MOMMA : You come to our shelter, Esther.
ESTHER : No, Momma, it's not so near the theatre. Please don't worry about me, I promise to take care.
MANNY : Momma, Esther's had a wonderful idea. She said couldn't I chalk on the blackout so as to brighten up the room for you. You'd like that, wouldn't you ?
POPPA : Chalking on a good piece of cardboard. What for do you want to make the home a dirty mess ?
MOMMA : Manny chalks good, Poppa. It will make the home look better.
POPPA : What you say ? You have a good piece of cardboard and you want him to scribble all over ?
MOMMA : Ach, Poppa, let him do it. You will like it when he's done. You wait.
POPPA : What will people say when they come in mine home and find on the furniture a lot of boy scribbles?
MOMMA : What you care what people say. They say, " Hm, Abie, that's a fine clever boy you got there, it makes the room look nice."
POPPA : You spoil them all. First you spoil the children and then you spoil the furniture.
MOMMA : Wait. It will be very pretty, eh, Manny ?
MANNY : No, Momma, it's not meant to be pretty.
POPPA : Oi, oi, not even meant to be pretty !
MOMMA : I think he'll do it very pretty. (*Puts rollmop herrings and bread on table.*)
REENY (*runs into street and calls off*) : O.K. See you to-morrow then. (*Puts key in door.*)
ESTHER : I must be going. (*Kisses parents.*)
REENY : I say, Doreen, don't forget your purse next time. You'll forget your head one day. (*Leaves door open and runs to corner.*) I say, did you ask about Thursday ?

DOREEN (*off*): Yes I did.
MOMMA: What a draught.
DOREEN (*off*): Is Joyce coming?
REENY: No, she says. . . .
MOMMA: Reeny, mine child, come in and shut the door. You want us all to freeze?
REENY: What, Momma? Just a sec.
DOREEN (*off*): Did you say something?
REENY (*calls off*): No, it's all right. I say, you know that boy that Doris was going with, he's been passed A.1 for the R.A.F.

[*Esther puts on coat.*]

POPPA: What for she shout like that. Tell her to come in and shut the door.
DOREEN: (*Off*) But he wanted to go into Tanks.
ESTHER: I'm just going; I'll tell her.
REENY: I know, but he's got flat feet and the Army didn't like it.
ESTHER (*at door*): Come in, Reeny, you're freezing everyone.
REENY: Oh, sorry. Good night then, Doreen, see you Thursday.
DOREEN (*off*): 'Night, Reeny.
REENY (*to Esther*): Are you going out?
ESTHER: Yes.
REENY: Don't you look gorgeous! Come into the light, let's look at you.
ESTHER: I shall be late.
REENY (*feeling blouse*): Ooh, isn't it nice. How much?
ESTHER (*laughs*): Goodbye.

[*She goes.*]

POPPA: Shut the door.
REENY (*shuts it*): Sorry, all. Where's Esther off to, then? (*Kisses parents.*)

MANNY (*at table, drawing*): She's going to see *The Merchant of Venice*. She'll tell us about it to-morrow.
REENY: Is she going with Sammy?
MOMMA: No, she's not going with Sammy. Take off your coat. Supper.
REENY: Uh, huh, it's Jeff then, is it?
MOMMA: Sit. Don't talk so much. Abie, supper. Manny, put away the drawing.
MANNY: Oh, just let me do this bit, Momma. I'm not taking up much room.
MOMMA: You can't eat and draw at the same time.
MANNY: I'll eat in a moment, I'm not hungry.
POPPA: Do like Momma tells you, Manny.
MOMMA: Ach, let him finish that little bit.

[*Poppa shrugs.*]

REENY: I say, Momma, you know Joyce Rubens. . . ?
MOMMA: No, I don't think so.
REENY: Yes, you do. You know her, Poppa? She came here one night when we'd been out to a social at the club.
POPPA: I don't remember.
REENY: Yes, you do. It was about four months ago.
MANNY: Well, what about her?
REENY: Well, the place where she works, the man that she works for, his brother was killed in that terrible raid the night before last. Isn't it awful! He was just going home. . . .
POPPA: No, no, Reeny, no details, please.
REENY: But wasn't it awful, though?
MOMMA: Eat, mine child.
REENY: Where'll Esther have supper then? (*Pause.*) Personally I think we ought to meet this Jeff of hers. Why don't you ask her to bring him home, Momma, then we could give him the once-over.
MOMMA: Mine Esther has plenty of nice Yiddisher

boys she can bring to the home. Always they are welcome. So why for should she want to bring this Goy. The less she sees from him, the better.

REENY : But I think she's madly in love. She sits quiet sometimes with that far-away look, and she eats enough to keep a flea going.

MOMMA : Eat, Manny. Leave the drawing. You worry Poppa. Yesterday Poppa tells me " Why is Manny so thin, maybe you don't feed him good."

POPPA : *I* tell you this ?

MOMMA : Yes, you tell me Manny is thin.

POPPA : I do ?

MOMMA : Well, maybe you don't notice, but I notice how thin he is and I tell to you yesterday, "Manny is thin." Maybe you don't hear me. Is it my fault if you don't hear what you tell me ?

POPPA : Eat, Manny. You drive your Momma meshuger.

[*A pause while they all eat.*]

REENY : Oh, I wish I was in love. There's a boy at our office has gorgeous eyes ; but he's too cheeky for my liking.

POPPA : In love ! Give a girl a nice good Yiddisher man to marry, and when they're married she will love him.

REENY : Well, Sammy would make a good husband for her but she doesn't love him.

POPPA : You wait. When they're married she will love him.

MOMMA : Sammy is a good boy.

REENY : But she never really liked him, and she won't look at him now she's met Jeff, not for all his good position.

MOMMA : One day soon he will go abroad with the Army, and then Esther will be our own Esther again.

MANNY: But if she really wants to marry Jeff, Momma. . . .
MOMMA: How should you know from such things? Eat.
MANNY: But, Momma, I want to know, supposing Poppa had been a Goy, wouldn't you have. . . .
MOMMA (*angry*): What you mean! "Suppose Poppa had been a Goy."

[*Reeny laughs.*]

POPPA (*angry*): For why should you talk from such things in front of the children?
REENY: Hey! I'm not a child.
POPPA: You're still a child. Mine child. You will be for a long time.
MOMMA: Esther too, she's only a child.
REENY: Don't be funny, Momma; Esther's eighteen and there are two men in love with her. Could I wash my hair to-night if the sirens don't go?
MOMMA: Last night, Reeny, you were late; till two o'clock we were in the shelter. To-night go to bed early. To-morrow you run home quick from work and before supper you do it.
REENY: Joyce's sister got double pneumonia from washing her hair and not drying it. She was in hospital for ages. Wasn't it awful!
POPPA: Your friend Joyce, she's full of her troubles.
REENY: She says it's just life.
MOMMA: Finished, Manny?
MANNY: Yes. May I wash up? I don't like drying.
REENY: After yesterday's disaster I should think not.
MOMMA: To-night he will be careful. Not to take much hot water; we make tea from the kettle. Poppa sit and rest a little. When the table is clear we move the machine for Poppa to work. Manny, give Poppa the watch or you get it wet.

[*Poppa puts the watch in his pocket.*]

REENY (*sings*): I–I–I–I love you very much
I–I–I–I think you're grand.

[*Etc. : imitates Carmen Miranda.*]

MOMMA (*clears table*): Manny, why for you not eat your bread ?
MANNY : I've had enough, Momma.
MOMMA : Tt-tt-tt.
REENY (*stops singing a moment*): Manny eats O.K. You wouldn't like him fat, would you ?
MOMMA : Yes, I'd like him fat. Fat.
REENY : I don't like fat men. Tall and slender's my type. (*Resumes singing.*)
POPPA (*quietly*): Oi, oi.
REENY : " I–I–I–I love you very much."
MOMMA : Give, Manny, I do it. Draw. Not to take up much room from the table, in a minute I put Poppa's work there.

[*Reeny sings and dances with crockery.*]

POPPA : What a lot of room for work.
MOMMA : There will be plenty of room. I do the button-holes without the table.

[*A knock at the street door.*]

REENY : I'll bet it's about the blackout. (*Goes to door.*) Why, it's Sammy ! You're unlucky, Esther's gone out to-night.
MOMMA : Come in, come in, Sammy. It's Sammy, Poppa, isn't that good ?

[*Enter Sammy. Warden's helmet and gas mask slung on his back.*]

Esther she's gone with her girl-friends to see the

theatre. She'll be very sorry you come when she's not here.

POPPA : That's right. Pleased to see you, Sammy.

MOMMA : It's good and warm here. Take off your coat, we make some tea. Come. Sit here and talk with Poppa. So, not on duty to-night, Sammy ?

SAMMY : Not to-night, Mrs. Brodsky.

MOMMA : I just finish the wash-up and then I work at the table. The children are just going to bed.

MANNY : Oh, Momma !

MOMMA : Last night we was late from the sirens, to-night they go to bed good and early.

MANNY : Not just yet, Momma. Just let me draw a little bit more.

REENY : Don't be tactless, Manny. I'll make the tea and then Manny and I can take ours to bed.

MOMMA : That's right, Reeny.

SAMMY (*looks at drawing. Clears throat*) : That's very pretty, Manny. What is it ?

MANNY : Oh, dear. It's not meant to be pretty.

POPPA : Ask him for why. He wants to make a picture but he doesn't want it pretty. (*Shrugs.*)

SAMMY : That's a funny idea, Manny.

MOMMA : You wait. It will be pretty.

REENY : If you want something pretty you ought to have seen our Esther all done up to-night in a new blouse.

MOMMA : She's only out to the theatre with her girl-friends.

SAMMY : Oh—yes.

POPPA : How's business, Sammy ?

SAMMY : Business is good.

REENY : I passed by your new shop in my lunch-hour to-day. The window looks lovely with all those dummy boxes of cigarettes.

MOMMA : Reeny, Manny. To bed. Ssshoo. I bring the tea.
REENY : The kettle's boiling, I'll take it.
MOMMA : Go. Both. I bring it.
REENY : Good night then, Sammy, excuse me retiring early.
SAMMY : Good night, Reeny.
MANNY : Good night.
SAMMY : Good night, Manny.
REENY : Good night, Poppa. (*Kisses him.*)
MANNY : Good night, Poppa. (*Kisses him.*)
POPPA : Good night, good night.
MOMMA : Go. I say good night later to both.

[*Reeny and Manny go. Momma makes tea.*]

POPPA : So . . . business is good.
SAMMY : Yes.
MOMMA : Sit, Sammy.
POPPA : Many customers ?
SAMMY : Well . . . too many. I mean, I can't get enough stock. As fast as it comes in we sell it.
POPPA : So.
SAMMY : We never refuse if we can help it.
POPPA : Don't you have special customers ?
SAMMY : I like to think everyone's special. Your casual customer of to-day may be your big one after the war. (*Despondent.*) I like to look ahead.
MOMMA : You've done very good till now. To open your own shop, that's very bright for a young man.
SAMMY : Oh, I don't know. When I get the stock I want, I'd like to expand the business quite a lot.
MOMMA : Soon the war will be over. Soon it will be better.
SAMMY : I'm training two assistants now, so that if I get called up, the shop won't have to close down.

MOMMA : But you weren't passed for the Army because from your eyes.
SAMMY : It's early days yet, Mrs. Brodsky. They're only calling up the A.1 class now, but as soon as they need more men, they won't mind if they're A.1 or not.
MOMMA : Tt-tt.
POPPA : You think they call you up ?
SAMMY : I look ahead. If they don't I'll be lucky.
MOMMA : Take some cheese-cake, Sammy, it will do you good. And help yourself to sugar. Don't make compliments. Take. There's plenty from cheese-cake, I make plenty. Talk with Poppa ; I take for the children. Eat. Drink. Keep warm. Poppa, see he takes plenty. (*Going.*) Not to trouble with work, Poppa. I do it. Talk with Sammy.

[*She goes.*]

POPPA : Help yourself, Sammy.
SAMMY : After you.

[*Pause.*]

Mrs. Brodsky always makes good cheese-cake.
POPPA : Yes, she makes it good.

[*Pause.*]

SAMMY : How's business, Mr. Brodsky ?
POPPA : Not good, not bad. A lot of work.
SAMMY : Yes, I suppose so.

[*Pause.*]

What's the play she's gone to see ?
POPPA : *The Merchant from Venice.*
SAMMY : Oh.
POPPA : A play from Shakespeare.

SAMMY : Yes.
POPPA : Esther likes Shakespeare.
SAMMY : Yes, she does.

[*Pause.*]

POPPA : Momma will be back soon.
SAMMY : I . . . want to talk to you both.
POPPA : Yes.

[*Pause. Momma enters.*]

MOMMA : Talk, Poppa. Talk with Sammy. I do a few button-holes.
POPPA : Sammy's been telling me business is good.
SAMMY (*hurriedly*) : I hope you don't mind me calling on you like this, but I . . . do you mind if I smoke ?
MOMMA : Smoke. Eat some more cheese-cake. Give Sammy another cup of tea, Poppa. Talk, Sammy.
SAMMY (*accepts more tea*) : Thank you. I knew she'd be out to-night, that's why I wanted to come and see you.
POPPA : How would you know she was going out ?
SAMMY : She told me. She told me she was going out with . . . someone else.
POPPA : And Momma keeps telling she's out with her girl-friends.
MOMMA (*smiles*) : I forgot.
SAMMY : Oh, that's all right. (*Clears throat.*) Esther's been honest with me, and I'd like to talk it over with you. She hadn't been into the shop for some time, so to-day I thought she'd come in to. . . . I thought it must be all over with this other. . . . I don't know why . . . and then she just told me. . . . (*Clears throat.*)
MOMMA : Look, Sammy, Poppa and me was both worried. But with mine Esther we don't say, " Don't go out with this Goy or we lock you up." We say,

" Esther, it's all right; you're a child. You want to be foolish. All right, be foolish for a little time, and very soon you will be our own Esther again." She is young, Sammy, and her heart is soft. But it's a good heart; it won't hurt Poppa and you and me. You wait. One day soon Esther will say, " I'm sorry, Sammy, I was foolish; now it's over."

SAMMY (*mumbles*): I hope you're right.

POPPA: Why she want to waste her best days? A young Jewish woman is like a flower. One day a bud, then one day after, a beautiful bloom. But only for a day. Very soon the petals drop and the bloom is gone. It won't stay.

SAMMY: She's never . . . I mean . . . she used to ask me here, and she let me take her out . . . but she never said she'd marry me. I didn't want to rush her, so I just took things quietly . . . and thought if we got to know each other a bit . . . she might . . . she knew I was serious, but . . . well, once I bought her a brooch, and she wouldn't take it.

MOMMA: Tt-tt.

SAMMY: That was before she met . . . this fellow, so really she's under no obligation to me. I shouldn't really feel . . . I just. . . .

MOMMA: Poppa and me will have a good talk with her. We will talk with her.

SAMMY: I don't want you to upset her.

MOMMA: No, no. It will be easy now. Yesterday Poppa talked with Rabbi Hurstmann and he too will talk with our Esther. And last night Poppa wrote to her Uncle Ben, what lives in Cricklewood, and he will know what to do.

POPPA: Ben has done good for himself. He will know what to do.

MOMMA: Ben is Poppa's brother. Very clever. He has done good in the dress business and made a lot

of money. He gave Manny a big gold watch for his Barmitzvar.

SAMMY : Maybe it's best if I don't try to see her for a while.

MOMMA : Very soon we speak with her, and when Poppa has a letter from Ben, he will come and tell you. Not to worry, Sammy. (*Suddenly.*) Hush ! Not to talk ! Oi, oi, I thought so.

[*From the distance a siren wails. A nearby one echoes it.*]

Manny ! Reeny ! They won't be in bed yet. (*Shouts*) Bring the rug, Reeny ; not to stop, come quick.

[*Runs out.*]

SAMMY : I must report at the Post, Mr. Brodsky.

[*Poppa and Sammy put on coats.*]

POPPA (*looks at Manny's watch from pocket*) : Later tonight. You go on duty ?

SAMMY : Yes. (*Calls.*) Goodbye, Mrs. Brodsky, I'll have to go.

[*Exit.*]

MOMMA (*from off*) : What you doing, Manny ? Put the shoes on later. The coats are behind the door. Go, Reeny. I bring the rug. Oi, oi, and mine Esther at the theatre.

[*Reeny comes in.*]

MANNY (*enters*) : She'll go to a shelter, Momma, don't worry. (*Puts on shoes.*)

MOMMA : Run. Run. Wait, children. Not to go in the street till Poppa tells you.

REENY : Here's your coat, Momma, oh, gosh ! and me with half my curlers in. It's never any use going to bed early.

MOMMA : Don't talk. Listen.

[*Silence: the sirens have stopped.*]

All right. Go with Poppa. I turn out the light. Run. Do like Poppa tells you.

REENY (*going with Poppa*) : Oh, Lord, I bet it'll last till all hours, just when I want an early night.

MOMMA : Oh, why should mine Esther be at the theatre ?

MANNY (*going with Momma*) : She'll be all right, Momma, she promised she wouldn't stay. . . .

[*The front door slams.*]

MANNY : Oh, Momma, I forgot my book, what am I going to do if it's a long one ?

REENY : Momma, have you brought the biscuits ?

MOMMA (*in loud whisper*) : Not to shine the torch up, Reeny. Keep the hand over. You want them to see where we're going ?

[*Darkness. Then the hum of a single plane. Far-away guns. A thud. Fade into inset scene. A faint light reveals steps, on which Esther and Jeff are sitting. It is part of a tube station. There is a crash and then silence.*]

JEFF (*after a pause*) : Would you like to change your mind and go further down ?

ESTHER : No.

JEFF : There won't be a mob like last time.

ESTHER : Not like last time, but masses of people sleep there every night.

JEFF : Does it seem long ago to you ?

ESTHER : When we first met ? Not long. How frightened I was.

JEFF : You weren't scared of the fire above.

ESTHER : No, I didn't mind what was above. What

made my heart thump was the crush of people fighting to get down, and knowing I'd not the strength to push my way against them.

JEFF : These must have been the very stairs.

ESTHER : And then I saw you, a stranger, trying to go up, and I knew if I could only reach you we could push our way up together.

JEFF : Seems funny looking back. People yelling " fire " and us going towards it. And the others thinking they'd be safer below.

ESTHER : I don't like the safety of numbers. What's the time ?

JEFF : Ten forty-eight.

ESTHER : The longer it lasts the longer I can be with you. If only it could be a long, long false alarm.

[*A thud : They kiss.*]

ESTHER : I saw George to-day.

JEFF : What George ?

ESTHER : Your George. Your brother George. He doesn't like us.

JEFF : He's jealous of me loving you ; that's all. How come you saw him ?

ESTHER : He and Manny were fighting.

JEFF : Was he rude to you ?

ESTHER : No. How can they help it ? Practically the first thing a baby learns is " dirty Jew ", or if he's a Jewish baby he'll be told not to make friends with a Goy " because he's not one of Us ". And then it grows and grows. . . . Were you the same at school ?

JEFF : I think so.

ESTHER : You hated boys because they were Jewish ?

JEFF : Yes.

ESTHER : Why, Jeff ?

JEFF : I don't know.

[*A crash above. Pause.*]

You told them it was me you were with ?

ESTHER : Yes. Did you ?

JEFF : Yes.

ESTHER : Your mother must hate me—with your leave so short.

JEFF : She hides the mention of you away. I try to tell her about you. . . .

ESTHER : Jeff.

JEFF : Yes ?

ESTHER : Do you want me to change the name of my religion. . . .

JEFF : I want nothing of you changed.

ESTHER : But your mother. . . .

[*They stand up for a young porter to pass.*]

PORTER : Par' me. Lift's out of order. (*Gaily.*) Seen a suicide this afternoon. Woman rush headlong down the tunnel. Arms over here, legs over there, head somewhere else. 'Snothing. Seen a lot of suicides. This is my seventh. 'Snothing. Well, I mean, it's nothing, is it ? (*Dreamily.*) I dunno, I come to believe in re-carnation. Tell you why. See a man dead. Breath's gone out of his body, see ? Well, life's got to go on somewhere, hasn't it ? There can't be just a blank ! So life comes back, see ? But somewhere different. Perhaps he comes back as a king or perhaps as a horse. Daresay horses think their lives as good as ours, just walking about in fields and eating. Can't tell what a horse thinks, can you ? Yes, I do ; believe in re-carnation. Mind you, had a good life this one. Don't know what I'll be next. One thing, won't get married next time. I'm teetotal too. That'll surprise you. Got a picture of the wife and kids somewhere. (*Searches pockets.*)

[*An Old Woman's drunken voice is heard descending stairs singing "Onward Christian Soldiers". She enters from above.*]

WOMAN: Isn't it a lovely world? Isn't life beautiful? (*Sings "Onward Christian Soldiers".*)

PORTER (*kindly: attempting to help her*): Sit down, Ma.

WOMAN (*sitting*): Sit on the filthy ground. I—won't—I—won't.

[*She sits heavily. Voice from below: "Shut up, will you, we've got to be up at five."*]

PORTER (*shouts downstairs*): Shut your mouth. Lucky to be here. Move further down if you don't appreciate the conversation. (*To Esther.*) Here's the picture. Boy on the right. Girl on the wife's knee. One night I was out on the spree and I come home and tell the missus I'd been kept here and she'd been here to find out if I was here and I wasn't. Copped it good and proper.

[*An explosion.*]

Got a theory. Why do you suppose he's deliberately picking out the churches, eh? Tell you why. Because it's my theory he's deliberately picking out the churches on purpose, see? So that when the invasion comes them church-bells isn't going to be able to ring out a warning, see? As plain as the nose on a Jew's face. Mark my words. Not going to let us ring any blasted bells, not bloody well he ain't.

[*Explosion.*]

Still wonder what I'll be next time.

WOMAN: I feel sick.

PORTER: All right, old girl, come with me. (*Helps her up.*)

WOMAN : (*As she passes Esther.*) Love's young dream, eh ?
(*To Jeff.*) Onward ! Christian soldier. . . .
(*Sobs.*) marching as to bloody war . . .

[*Voice from below:* " *Chatter-chatter-chatter!* "]

PORTER (*shouts down*) : Keeps you awake, does it ? Every time you cough I think a blooming bomb's dropped. (*To Woman.*) Come on, Ma.

[*They go down. A crash from above and gunfire.*]

ESTHER : I hope they're all right.
JEFF : Have they got a shelter ?
ESTHER : There's one quite near our street. Have yours ?
JEFF : Yes, thank God. My Christ, it's easier being a soldier.
ESTHER : They won't send you abroad yet, will they ? You'd tell me ?
JEFF : I'd find some way of telling you. It won't be yet.
ESTHER : When you were. . . .

[*He kisses her.*]

JEFF : What were you going to say ?
ESTHER : I don't know. Oh, yes ; only about, when you were at school, did you hate the Jews because of Jesus Christ being crucified ?
JEFF : Oh, no, I wasn't religious.
ESTHER : But your mother. . . ?
JEFF : She's never had much time for church-going.
ESTHER : If I changed the name of my religion, do you think she'd mind us marrying then ?
JEFF (*uneasy*) : Don't change.
ESTHER : A name is nothing. I'm not frightened of a name.

JEFF : Christian and Jew, they mean more than names.
ESTHER : To her ? What more then, if it's not religion ?
JEFF : I don't know. It's deep but I don't know what it is.
ESTHER : Won't she tell you ?
JEFF : Most likely she doesn't know in words.
ESTHER : She makes you feel guilty loving me, I know.
JEFF : No, not guilty. . . .
ESTHER : No, not guilty, something near it though. I feel it with Momma and Poppa. Guilty of not feeling guilty when they think I am. (*Sighs.*) And a great longing to make them pleased with me.
JEFF : I'd do anything to make her happy. . . . If only she'd see you just once, she'd feel so different. It's funny ; I'm fond of her. Not that I've seen much of her since Dad died. Started on the lorries when I was eighteen ; three nights away every week. But always a welcome when I got home.
ESTHER : Oh, Jeff, I don't want to make you quarrel with her. Maybe we shouldn't. . . .
JEFF (*kisses her*) : Every time you look worried you'll just get kissed, see ?
ESTHER : But, Jeff, it's. . . .
JEFF (*kisses her*) : See ?

[*Esther laughs. The sirens sound the all-clear from afar, then nearer.*]

That's the all-clear now.
ESTHER : No, it's another alert, not the all-clear. I'm sure it's another alert.
JEFF : Afraid not. We shall have to go.
ESTHER : Yes, we shall. I must be back at once or

Momma will fret. I usually thank God for the all-clear, but I can't when it's parting us.

[*They kiss.*]

I must go.

JEFF : Good night.

ESTHER : Don't come back with me, we'll part upstairs. We'd be bound to meet them in our street.

[*They exit. The lights fade. The sirens cease.*]

[*The noise of a fire-engine approaches and recedes. A clock strikes midnight. The scene is now the same as the opening of the act. There is darkness. Esther comes down the street with a torch. She turns on the light and stands listening a moment. Takes off coat. Goes to above table.*]

ESTHER : Please God keep him safe. Don't let him get wounded or hurt in any way. Please God don't let him be sent abroad. Keep him safe. Even if I'm not to marry him, God, don't let anything hurt him, please. Even if I was never to see him again, don't let him get hurt or wounded or killed—ever. (*Recites the Hebrew prayer.*) Boroogh artô Adownoy may Lairgh hô ow lom.

[*Enter Momma, Poppa, Reeny, Manny. Esther starts to clear tea-cups and cheese-cake.*]

MANNY (*first to arrive*) : Yes, she's here, Momma.

MOMMA : Thank God, thank God. You went in a shelter, child ?

ESTHER : Yes, Momma, I went down the tube. I've been home only a minute. Thank God you've come.

REENY : What a night, eh ? I'll bet there was thousands killed. The noise !

POPPA : Never again you must be out at night,

Esther. You make Momma unhappy. You make her very unhappy.

ESTHER : I'm sorry, Momma, I don't want you to worry about me.

MOMMA : Don't want, don't want. How can I help from worry ? Poppa sits and listens. When you are with us it's all right, we take no notice from the bangs ; Poppa can sleep ; we can talk. But what from can we talk when Poppa listens from every bang. Children, bed. Reeny, take the rug for you and Esther. Don't talk. Go.

REENY : I'll dry up the things.

MOMMA : We will do that, Esther and me.

REENY : I should think I need some beauty sleep by now. (*Yawns.*) I'll get the bed hotted up before you come, Esther. What I do is dive under the blanket and blow till it's snug. Good night, all.

MANNY : Good night, everybody.

MOMMA : Good night, good night. Go. Sleep.

[*Reeny and Manny go.*]

(*Helps Esther with cups, etc.*) Sammy was here to see Poppa and me.

ESTHER : Sammy ? To-night ?

MOMMA : Before we went out.

ESTHER : Oh.

MOMMA : Sammy's a good boy. He want to marry you. Why for don't you marry him and be happy ?

ESTHER : I wouldn't be happy if I married him, Momma.

POPPA : Yes, you'd be happy. What does a young girl know if she'd be happy ?

ESTHER : Oh, no, Poppa. I couldn't marry Sammy not loving him, and just hoping I would after we were married.

MOMMA : But when the babies come, Esther, you'll have the babies to love too.
ESTHER : I love someone else.
MOMMA : Esther, listen. What good to you is this love ? You can't make a husband from a Goy. You waste your heart in giving where it bear no fruit. When you marry, you forget. Believe me.
ESTHER : No, Momma, I can't believe you. I love who I love. I love Jeff, Momma, and I want to marry him.
POPPA : Marry ! (*Throws out his hands.*) Esther ; why you not understand ? Never can you marry out of the faith. You want to turn your back on God ? Oh, mine child, mine child.
ESTHER : Please, please, don't say that. Why would God mind if I marry Jeff, who's a good man and loves me as I love him ? How could that be against God ? I don't understand.
MOMMA : Look, Esther, leave God out for a moment. Listen. . . .
POPPA : " Leave God out for a moment ! " There is not a moment without God. There is no question of good or bad but from God. You leave God out for a moment and you leave Him out for ever !
MOMMA : All right, leave God in. Poppa explains bad but he means good. He wants to save his child from hurt from things she can't understand because she is young. What you think, Esther, if you have babies from marrying with a Goy? Your own babies would be Goys. Their Momma would be a stranger, an alien from them. Your own babies, Esther.
ESTHER : No. Our children would be all right. They wouldn't know the hurt that Manny feels of being called a dirty Jew, because being of both bloods they would have a chance to understand both. I think our children would be happy.

MOMMA : You think when a black man marries a white woman, the children are happy ? They're outcasts. They're nothing. They don't belong. The black people don't trust them, the white people think they are blacks and turn away from them. They are in between two races, belonging nowhere. That is what your children would be, Esther ; between the two, belonging nowhere. And when you first quarrel, hm ? Maybe about the children, maybe about nothing big, maybe because from a cheese-cake or a button, what you think the first thing your Goy will say to you ? He'll call you " dirty Jewess ", you wait. And every time you don't agree, it will be in his mind because you are Yiddisher. Even if he don't say from such things he will think them. And what about when he comes back from the Army, mine little Esther, will he have work to do ?

ESTHER : He'll be able to get work. Even if they don't take him back where he was, he's sure to find work.

MOMMA : Ach, mine poor child. After the last war Poppa had no work. He had big hopes too, but no work. No work.

ESTHER : But he got work later, and married you, Momma, and brought up three children and gave us everything we wanted. Then isn't that worth hoping for for my children too ?

MOMMA : It was a long time and it was hard. And he couldn't give me the home like Ben could give his wife, a home like what Sammy could give you. Sammy will do good, Esther, and he's a good boy, and what more can you want than a good Yiddisher husband what can give you a good home ?

ESTHER : I want nothing more, Momma, but I want something different. I'm not foolishly in love with

no thought for the future. I love with all my heart, and no future at all can change it.

POPPA : A good home—that is a little thing. A bad quarrel—that is a little thing. No work—that is also a little thing. But is God a little thing, for a young woman to raise her shoulders at Him ?

ESTHER : I'm not raising my shoulders at God. . . . I want you to understand, I want you to understand, and I've no words to show you what I. . . . Please, Poppa—Momma—meet Jeff. See him. Talk to him.

MOMMA : You think Poppa has never met a man like this ? How can you think you know better than Poppa what is a man like this ?

ESTHER : But Momma, Jeff's mother is saying this of *me*. And she won't meet me because I'm Jewish.

MOMMA (*shocked*) : She won't meet ! How can you want to marry with such a family ?

POPPA : Esther, they don't want you. We want you. Can you force where you are not wanted ? Can you turn away from Momma and Poppa who love you ? From God ?

[*Esther bursts into tears.*]

Mine child, it is a hard time when the heart must learn. But it will pass. We will help. Soon the bad time will be gone. (*Puts arms round her.*) Cry—cry—cry the bad away, till the heart is good again.

MOMMA : No more talk. She is tired. To bed. Not to worry. Everything will be all right. To-morrow mine Esther will understand. To-morrow she will be our own Esther again. To bed.

*Curtain*

# ACT TWO

*Same as Act* 1. *November. A few weeks later.*

*Reeny has her head out of the window, calling to Joyce and Doreen in the street.*

REENY : Well, come if you can.
DOREEN (*off*) : What, to-morrow, lunch-hour ?
REENY : Yes, I expect I'll still be here, worse luck. It feels awful now I've got up.
JOYCE (*off*) : Cheerio. See you to-morrow.
REENY : O.K. About the same time, eh ? Bit of a fog coming up. Hope you get back O.K.
DOREEN : Hope so too.
JOYCE : Cheerio !
REENY: Goodbye. Give my love to Maurice.
JOYCE : No fear.
REENY : Well, remember me to him then ! Goodbye !
JOYCE : Goodbye.
REENY : Cheerio !
JOYCE : Cheerio !
DOREEN : Cheerio !
REENY : Tata !
JOYCE : Tata !
REENY : Bye-bye ! Be seeing you. Bye !

[*Shuts the window. Momma enters and takes off her hat and coat.*]

Did you tell them at the office ?
MOMMA : Yes, yes. It's all right. Sit.
REENY : Did they think I was a fool staying away just because of a boil ?
MOMMA : No, no, they understand. I tell them. Sit, Reeny, child, sit.

[*Reeny sits on couch and covers legs with a rug.*]

REENY : I hope you made it sound bad enough. Did you tell them I had to have a bandage ?
MOMMA : Yes, yes, I tell them. There's a big fog coming. Already it is dark.
REENY : I like a nice white bandage. You wouldn't think a little thing like a boil would make you feel so awful, would you ? but you can never tell. It might have gone sceptic and spread all through my blood. Joyce says her cousin had boils all over her neck and seat, and she didn't take care of them, and nearly died of scepticism.
MOMMA : Tt-tt.
REENY : Why were you gone so long ? The fog isn't as bad as that.
MOMMA : No. I went to see Sammy. He will come to supper. We have an extra piece of cold fried fish. Sammy will like that.
REENY : So do I. Have you got enough ?
MOMMA : I got plenty.
REENY : Did you tell Esther you were going to ask Sammy ?
MOMMA : I only thought when I was out. I was near his shop, and I had a good supper for him, so I tell him to come. (*Clears lunch things.*)
REENY : We certainly don't see much of him these days. I like Sammy. He's a bit slow for my liking, but he's got nice manners.
MOMMA : Poppa will be in soon to work. The light in the shop was bombed. When it get too dark he will bring the work home.

[*Esther enters from street.*]

REENY : Is that Poppa ? Esther ! What are you doing here at this hour ?
ESTHER : I'm out to match some ribbon so I thought

I'd come and see how you were feeling. The fog's a good excuse for being a bit late.

[*Reeny uncovers rug to show bandage.*]

Is it worse ?

MOMMA : Much better. Reeny likes bandage better than plaster.

REENY : I don't like it better, but it's better for the leg.

ESTHER : You've done it very nicely, Momma.

MOMMA : I wash up. Stay a little, hm ?

ESTHER : I daren't stay long. Shall I help ?

MOMMA : No, no, child. Talk with Reeny.

REENY : Why don't they send the juniors to do the matching ?

ESTHER : They do usually, only it's a bit foggy. Anyway, two of them are away sick. I got a few sweets to cheer you up.

REENY : Oh, you are a darling. Ta, ever so. What kind ?

ESTHER : Not very exciting, I'm afraid. There wasn't any choice.

REENY (*looks in paper bag*) : Mm, scrumptious. Have one ?

ESTHER : No thanks, not just now.

REENY : Momma, have a sweet ?

MOMMA : Eat them. It will do you good.

REENY : Oh, come on; have one.

MOMMA : Later maybe.

ESTHER : How are you getting on with *Hamlet?*

REENY : It's deep, isn't it ?

ESTHER : Have you been very bored ?

REENY : No, I've had visitors. Sit. Joyce and Doreen came in in their dinner-hour and told me all the dirt. That poor Mrs Phillips has got her sister and two kids and her mother-in-law all come to her place,

because they were bombed out and there's no rooms to be had for love or money. Isn't it awful, and Joyce is going dancing to-night because her Maurice is home terribly suddenly on embarkation leave. He came into Lyons, she was on her second cup of tea, she couldn't believe her eyes. He hadn't been home or anything, just got in from the station. So she left him to go and tell his Mum while she came here to tell me. She's not meant to know it's embarkation leave. He says none of the chaps are meant to know, but they all do know, and he told her as long as she told nobody it was all right to tell her. He was up North—Tt—what a fool I am! He's the same regiment as Jeff, isn't he? (*Glances across room to Momma and lowers her voice.*) That means Jeff must be home, doesn't it? What a lucky thing I mentioned it. He must have gone to the caf to look for you.

MOMMA: Esther, have some tea while you're here, child?

[*Esther has risen.*]

REENY: Yes, stay and have a cupper.

ESTHER (*dazed*): No, I must. . . . (*Goes to door.*)

MOMMA: It won't take a moment. I get it now.

ESTHER: No, I've had. . . . (*Opens door.*)

REENY: Esther! You've left your patterns behind.

[*Esther takes patterns and goes.*]

Ouch!

MOMMA: Still hurting?

REENY: No, I moved suddenly. (*Munches sweets.*) Have one?

MOMMA: No; I don't fancy.

REENY: You stop fancying everything the moment it goes on the ration.

MOMMA (*pinches Reeny's cheek affectionately*): Enjoy them. They do you good.

REENY: Gosh, I've practically finished the whole lot already.

[*Enter Manny.*]

Manny! Everyone's coming to see me. I must be very ill.

MOMMA: Why so early, Manny?

MANNY: The fog. It's football day. We started, but we could hardly see the ball.

MOMMA: What a pity.

MANNY: Oh, I don't mind. Where's the board?

MOMMA: Not to draw at the table, Manny. Poppa will want it for work.

MANNY: So early?

MOMMA: There's no light at the shop.

MANNY: I don't need the table. Oh, here. (*Gives a "comic" to Reeny.*)

REENY: Oh, aren't you sweet! Ta ever so. Where did you get the money?

MANNY: I didn't. I swopped it.

REENY: What for?

MANNY: Crayons.

MOMMA: But what about the picture?

MANNY: Oh, I'll swop back again when Reeny's read it. I haven't finished pencilling yet. It'll take me some time as big as that. (*Finds board and squats.*) No, don't look yet. It looks like nothing yet.

MOMMA: I don't look.

REENY: She had a good dekko this morning but she didn't know which way up it went.

MOMMA: The pencil was too pale. I couldn't see what it was.

MANNY: I know. I'm doing it very very lightly at first till I know what I'm doing.

[*Enter Poppa.*]

MOMMA : Tt-tt ! Too dark already ?

POPPA : Yes. I bring it home.

REENY : Hallo, Poppa. (*Uncovers leg.*)

POPPA : Better, Reeny ?

REENY : Momma's given me a bandage, look.

POPPA : At the shop the window is too small. We can't see to work at all.

REENY : Poppa, do look.

POPPA : Worse ?

REENY : Much better, ta. I'm so glad you've come in early.

POPPA (*anxious*) : Why—you want something ?

REENY : No, I just like to see you, that's all.

MOMMA : She had some friends to see her, and Esther came for a little.

REENY : Only for a sec. She bought me some sweets, would you like one ?—ooh, sorry, no, I've eaten the lot. Oh, gosh, I am a pig. I'm so sorry, Poppa.

POPPA : I don't want. Why for, Manny, are you home from school ?

MANNY : The fog. It's football to-day, so we stopped.

POPPA : Ah, so. (*To Momma.*) I saw Ben.

MOMMA : Ah ? You had a good talk ?

POPPA : I tell you later. Ben is very clever. He asks for Esther to go and see him. Perhaps one evening.

MOMMA : I don't like for Esther to be out late.

POPPA : But with Ben she could stay for the night. Rosie will be pleased to have her. They have room.

MOMMA : If she would stay for the night is all right. Sammy comes to-night for supper.

POPPA : Good, so. And your Uncle Ben is very kind, Reeny. What you think ? He asks, " How is Reeny ? " and when I tell him, "poor Reeny's not so good " ; what you think ? He tells me : " Here is for Reeny a pair of stockings to make her leg better quick."

REENY : No !
MOMMA : Ach, Poppa, Ben doesn't have to buy the children presents because you ask to talk with him.
POPPA : It's what I tell him. But he brings them just the same.
REENY : Oh, let me see !
MOMMA : Sit, Reeny. Poppa will give them to you.
REENY : I say, I'm jolly glad you didn't stop him. Oh, boy ! silk !

[*Manny looks up from drawing.*]

MOMMA (*worried*) : He sent nothing for Manny ?
POPPA : Wait ! Wait ! How do you expect for me to do everything together.
MOMMA : There is something for Manny ?
POPPA : Yes, yes, there is something for Manny.
MOMMA : Ach, he didn't have to buy for all the children.
POPPA : It's what I tell him. But he buy just the same.
MOMMA : And Esther ? Did he forget Esther ?
POPPA : For Esther too, Ben did not forget.
MOMMA : Ach, it's not necessary.
MANNY : What's for me ?
POPPA : Wait. I find it. Ben want to know, " How is Manny ? " " Manny is well," I tell him. " What does he do ? " Ben want to know. " What does he do ! " I tell him. " Manny makes a mess with the home, he want to chalk all over." (*Wags finger at Manny.*) " Don't let him spoil the furniture with chalk ! " Ben tells me. " What can I do to stop him ? " I tell him. " Give him paint," Ben tells me, " I think paint is better." So I have to put in my pocket all this, and spoil the good shape from my coat. (*Takes out pots of poster paint, and puts them one by one on table.*)
MANNY : Yellow !
MOMMA : Red !

MANNY: White! Green! Blue! Black! Look, Momma, look!

MOMMA (*rapt*): I look.

REENY: Well, what do you know! Talk about throwing your bread upon the waters! Poppa, Manny just swopped his crayons to get me a comic. And now he won't have to swop them back again. And he won't have to wait till to-morrow to start on the colouring. Gosh! Isn't there justice in the world! (*Thoughtfully.*) I wonder what I can swop that I want lots back of?

MOMMA: No, Reeny. If you give with the hope of getting back more it's not good. Just to give. That is good.

REENY: Oh, I'd do it unconsciously. I was just wondering what I'd got.

POPPA: Stockings.

REENY: I don't think I'll chance them. It's not likely I'd get half a dozen pairs back out of the blue.

POPPA: Take them off the table, Manny. How do you expect for me to work.

[*Manny obeys.*]

MOMMA: And Esther?

POPPA: For Esther is a bag from leather.

REENY: Let's have a dekko.

POPPA: Later. When Esther is here. Not to put the paint on the floor, Manny, you make a dirty mess.

MOMMA: Wait. I give him a newspaper.

MANNY: I can't begin to-night. I haven't any brushes.

REENY: I'll treat you to some, Manny. There's a shilling in my tin.

[*Manny rushes to bedroom.*]

MOMMA (*calls*): Not now, Manny. To-morrow. The fog is bad.

MANNY (*off*): It's not far. I know where I can get them. I won't be five minutes. (*Comes back.*)
POPPA: Wait till to-morrow, Manny, like Momma says.
MOMMA: Ach, let him go, Poppa.

[*Manny grabs his coat and exits.*]

POPPA (*mimics*): Ach, let him go, Poppa.

[*Poppa starts work at the table. Momma makes supper preparations. Reeny reads comic.*]

MOMMA (*after a while, during business*): To-night Sammy will be here. Esther is better, maybe she has forgotten her Goy. She has not talked about him for very long, many weeks. Maybe now is a good time for Sammy to come. When you tell me you talk with Ben, I don't think it's necessary now. You should have talked with Ben much before, but Ben was away with Rosie, because from her being ill. You could not talk with him before. No matter. Esther can still stay with Ben, but better if he doesn't talk with her about the goyem business, because maybe that is over for Esther, and we don't want for him to remind her. But with Sammy to-night it will be good. Reeny and Manny can go to bed early, Reeny because from her leg and Manny because he will do what we tell him. Then, to leave Sammy and Esther together for a little, I will tell you, " Abie, I want for you to look at Reeny's leg."
REENY: That's all the sympathy I get. Just used as an excuse for getting out of the room.
MOMMA: We can't do the leg where there is visitors.
REENY: You never know, he might be interested.

[*Pause, while they are engaged in their various activities.*]

(*Giggles at the comic.*) You'd have thought I'd have

grown out of comics. Actually I was reading *Hamlet* when you came in; but it makes a nice change popping from one to the other. I'm a funny girl, I've got such a lot of different tastes. I don't know how I'd describe myself exactly. High-brow, low-brow, a bit of both, that's me.

[*Further activity. Slow dim-out. In the street outside Manny appears. Examines a paint-brush. Enter George.*]

GEORGE: Hey, you! (*Manny stops. George comes to him slowly.*)
What you got there?
MANNY: Nothing.
GEORGE: Then why did you put it in your pocket?

[*Manny shrugs.*]

I know something you don't know.
MANNY: What?
GEORGE: Something you'd like to know.
MANNY: What?
GEORGE: Something your sister would like to know, only I'm not going to tell you.
MANNY: I don't mind.
GEORGE: You would if you knew what it was.
MANNY: No, I wouldn't.
GEORGE: Yes, you would. If you tell me what you put in your pocket, I might tell you what it was.
MANNY: No.
GEORGE: Perhaps it's about my brother Jeff.

[*Manny shrugs.*]

(*Spits on the ground.*) Dirty Jew.
MANNY: Say that again and I'll smash your face in.

[*Pause.*]

GEORGE (*quickly*): Dirty Jew.

[*Runs off quickly. Manny makes as if to follow; shrugs, and enters house, now in complete blackout. A fog-horn is heard. Soon, enter Jeff and Esther in street.*]

JEFF : I didn't think it would take three days.
ESTHER : I'd no idea. I thought we could just get married the moment we applied.
JEFF : Three days. It seems eternity.
ESTHER : And yet it seems like no time at all if you're to be gone in three days.
JEFF : I may not be. They said a week's leave, but we may be recalled at any hour.
ESTHER : Suppose you go before the marriage licence goes through ?
JEFF : I don't know. I must think. I don't seem to be able to think straight at all. Everything goes at such a speed. I don't want this sort of life for you at all.
ESTHER : It was my fault for lying. But I had to. I had to do it suddenly ; I couldn't have done otherwise.
JEFF : They wouldn't have given us the licence at all if you hadn't said you were over twenty-one. I hadn't thought they'd ask if you were under-age. I could feel my heart like a sudden stone when he asked, " How old are you ? "
ESTHER : My heart was thumping too, but I knew as clear as clear what I was to say. I thought he'd notice my redness, but he didn't look up from that piece of paper.
JEFF : I just stood in silence not knowing whether it was right to let you tell a lie.
ESTHER : I lied because I want to marry you. I couldn't bear to have you go away and us not married.
JEFF : Maybe that would have been better.

ESTHER : No, no, never.
JEFF : But—I must force myself to say this to you—suppose I don't come back ?
ESTHER (*puts her hand on his mouth*) : Never think that. Never. Never say it.
JEFF : I must say it, Essie. You must face the thought.
ESTHER : I don't have to face such a thought, because my faith is deep as deep, and would squash the thought the moment it came. (*Suddenly puts her arms round him.*)
JEFF : I have faith too, but there are things in the world outside faith.
ESTHER : No, there's nothing bigger than knowing something inside.
JEFF : I must try and think straight, Essie. What's to happen if I get called back before the three days' waiting for the marriage licence ?
ESTHER : I don't know. I don't know.
JEFF : I don't know either. I should have thought before. I did a lot of thinking but not to the purpose. I thought we could just get married the moment we wanted, I didn't know we'd have to wait three days.
ESTHER : What happens, I wonder, if we do get married, and Momma and Poppa say no afterwards, when we tell them. Would we still be married if I'm under-age ?
JEFF : Yes. Once we're married, we're married.
ESTHER : I don't want to tell them until afterwards, because they could stop it. But I dread the telling. It'll make them so unhappy.
JEFF : Would you like me to be there ?
ESTHER : No, I must tell them alone. I shall be all right, you'll be my husband, my own husband. I shall be all right. If only I didn't love them it would be so easy.

JEFF : Maybe when they know they'll understand.
ESTHER : They won't find it easy to forgive me for not telling them until too late.
JEFF : It's me that's making you worry and lie and not be like yourself, and I can't forgive myself for that.
ESTHER : I can't do otherwise. (*Pause.*) The fog is clearing a bit. It must be getting late.
JEFF : Must you go yet ?
ESTHER : To-night, Jeff. Can we meet to-night ?
JEFF : Will you be able to come ?
ESTHER : Yes, I must. I'll tell them I must meet you. I can't let the three days pass and not be with you. I want to be with you every moment of them. Jeff . . . let me be with you to-night as if we were married ?

[*He holds her face in his hands and gazes at her. Then he takes a ring from his pocket and puts it silently on her finger.*]

JEFF : Let the ring marry us.

[*They kiss.*]

ESTHER : I daren't keep it on now. I'll tie it round my neck. I haven't anything to tie it with.
JEFF : Nor have I.
ESTHER : I've got a safety pin. I'll pin it inside my dress. What time shall I meet you ?
JEFF : Eight o'clock.
ESTHER : Eight o'clock. I must go now.
JEFF : How will you tell them you'll be out all night ?
ESTHER : I don't know.
JEFF : If you tell them you're with me. . . .
ESTHER : I shall have to tell them. They'd sit up all night waiting for me. (*Pause.*) Jeff, I know what I must do. To-night, before I come to you, I'll tell

them we're already married; that I'll stay the night with you—my husband. (*Pause.*) There's my ring to show.

JEFF: I can't let you.

ESTHER (*firm*): Where shall I meet you?

JEFF: We can meet the usual place.

ESTHER: But where can we stay?

JEFF: We'll find somewhere. I think Mrs Green would let us stay in her room above the shop, if we tell her we're married. She's never there at nights, she's made the shelter her home. I'll speak to her.

ESTHER: She's always been kind about messages and things——

JEFF: I'll ask her.

ESTHER (*pause*): There's your Mum to tell.

JEFF: Yes.

ESTHER: I shall have to go.

[*They kiss.*]

JEFF: Till eight o'clock.

ESTHER: Till death do us part.

[*The lights fade, a snatch of "Lili Marlene" is heard, then the lights come up on the Brodsky home, where Poppa, Momma, Reeny, Manny and Sammy are at supper.*]

POPPA: Should I take a torch to meet her?

MOMMA: Sit. You wouldn't see her in the fog. Esther will come. Not to worry.

REENY: I don't smoke or I'd certainly patronise you, but I've told everyone at the office about your shop, so if your sales go up you'll know why. Do you have a tall fellow with brown eyes come in ever?

SAMMY: Well, I don't really know.

REENY: You look out for him and ask him if his name's Harry, and tell him you know me. He'll be quite interested.

MOMMA : Don't talk so much, Reeny. Eat.
REENY : I'm a bit off my food to-day, I'm afraid.
MOMMA (*to Sammy*) : Esther will be herself to-night, you wait. Have a little more fish, Sammy ; we have plenty.
SAMMY : No more, thank you, Mrs Brodsky.
MOMMA : Then we go on to streudel.

[*Enter Esther.*]

POPPA : Esther ?
MOMMA : Ah, Esther ! She has come.

[*Sammy rises.*]

ESTHER : I'm so sorry I'm . . . (*sees Sammy*) Oh . . . Hallo, Sammy.
SAMMY : Hallo.
ESTHER : I didn't know you were. . . . I'm so sorry I'm late. The fog. . . .
MOMMA : Come and eat, child. Take off the coat, there. Sit.
ESTHER : I was kept. (*Kisses Momma and Poppa.*)
REENY : I said you'd be kept late.
POPPA : The fog is worse ?
ESTHER : I don't think so ; it's not too bad ; I mean, it was rather thick, and I had to go out. . . .
REENY : Did you match the ribbons ?
ESTHER : What ? Yes. No, I couldn't get the right colours.
MOMMA : It's good fish, Esther. Eat.
ESTHER : How have you been, Sammy ?
SAMMY : All right, thanks.
MOMMA : Have some streudel, Sammy, it is good.
SAMMY : You always make good things to eat, Mrs Brodsky.
MOMMA : Esther too can cook good. Next time you

come, Sammy, Esther will cook for you. Hm, Esther?

REENY: Oh, Esther's a jolly good cook; better than me, I'm a bit on the extravagant side. But do you know what happened to Doreen's cousin? She got married last year to a fellow in the Army, and she was absolutely hopeless at cooking. He had to do it all when he was on leave because he couldn't touch the stuff she dished up. After army cooking too! She said she was glad when he got sent abroad, it took a load off her mind; and Doreen said to her, "Well, anyway," she said, "if he dies on the battlefield he can't turn round and say it was your cooking that killed him!" But fancy getting married when you know your boy's going away any minute.

POPPA: To marry in war-time is crazy.

MOMMA: Why for not to marry in war-time? When they get sent away it is different, but to marry when you are young, to a good husband, what's the difference if it is war or not. Where is the sense to wait? (*Kicks Poppa under table.*)

POPPA: If they don't get sent away it is different.

MOMMA: What you think, Sammy?

SAMMY: Er—yes.

MOMMA: The war should make no difference.

SAMMY: Er—no.

MOMMA: Eat, Esther. We have nearly finished.

ESTHER: I don't want it, thank you, Momma.

MOMMA: What's the matter? Are you ill, child?

ESTHER: No, I'm just not hungry. Please, Momma.

MOMMA: She is tired. Later I give you a hot drink. Well, Sammy, so business is doing good, and they don't call you up.

SAMMY: Not yet, no, Mrs Brodsky.

MOMMA: Finish, Manny, don't dream.

REENY: I'm afraid we're not very entertaining this

evening, Sammy. I'm not feeling too good, myself; so you'll have to excuse me being a bit on the quiet side.

MOMMA : Poor Reeny must go to bed early because from her leg.

REENY : I'm not really meant to be up and about.

MOMMA : I come now and bandage it.

REENY : Can Poppa come and look at it ?

MOMMA : Poppa will come when he wants.

POPPA : Yes, I come.

MOMMA : Manny, bed.

MANNY : Oh, Momma, it's too early !

MOMMA : It's nearly eight o'clock.

ESTHER (*involuntarily*) : Eight o'clock !

MOMMA : You should always be in bed early. We spoil you. Go now.

SAMMY : Oh, Mr Brodsky, are you going now ?

POPPA : I go to look at Reeny's leg.

SAMMY : Doesn't Mrs Brodsky have to bandage it first ?

REENY : How can he look with the bandage on ?

SAMMY : No, no, I mean, I thought it would take some time to get the bandage off; I mean the one that's on now.

MOMMA : Poppa will be back soon. Wait together only a moment.

MANNY : 'Night, Esther, 'night, Sammy.

ESTHER : Good night, Manny.

SAMMY : Good night, Manny.

REENY : Good night, Sammy, you will excuse me, won't you ?

SAMMY : Good night, Reeny.

REENY : Oh, Poppa, you forgot to give Esther the present.

POPPA : I do it later.

REENY : There's a surprise for you, Esther. In that parcel. From Uncle Ben. A bag.
ESTHER : Oh ?
MOMMA : No more talk. Go.
REENY : Well, I can't hurry. Ouch ! See you later, Esther.

[*They go. Pause. Esther undoes a parcel.*]

ESTHER : I'm so sorry.
SAMMY : No, no, I thought. . . .
ESTHER : It's from Uncle Ben. A bag.
SAMMY : It's very nice.
ESTHER : Yes. Lovely.
SAMMY : It's not your birthday ?
ESTHER : No. Do sit down. We'll wait for them, they won't be long. (*Pause, intent on bag.*) Momma's determined to leave us alone together, and when she's determined it's difficult to stop her. Do smoke if you want to.
SAMMY : Thanks. (*Takes out packet.*) I wouldn't have come, only she told me you told her to ask me. I didn't know you weren't expecting me.
ESTHER : Oh, I'm pleased to see you, Sammy. I was surprised when I came in, that's all.

[*Pause.*]

SAMMY : When she said you'd asked me, I thought perhaps something had gone wrong, or you were unhappy about something—or something. Nothing's gone wrong, has it, Esther ?
ESTHER : No, Sammy. I'm sorry.
SAMMY : No, don't be sorry. I'm glad—for you. (*Pause.*) If anything ever did go wrong you wouldn't feel. . . . I mean, you wouldn't let pride or anything stop you from telling me, would you ?
ESTHER : Thank you.

SAMMY : You don't have to see me ever, but if ever you should want to, no matter for what reason, I'd always be. . . . I don't want to say anything, but just. . . . I mean, I wouldn't ever get married unless it was with you . . . no, I don't mean I'm proposing to you, I mean that even if in years to come you changed your mind, you wouldn't find I'd changed, because I'd always be . . .

ESTHER : Sammy ! You mustn't say that. Please ! That's no life for you. I can't change, Sammy. Forgive me. (*Pause.*) Would you think me terrible if I asked you to go ?

SAMMY : No, of course. Yes. . . . (*Puts on coat.*) Tell them I had to be home early . . . the fog. It's a nice bag.

ESTHER : Yes. Goodbye, Sammy.

[*Sammy goes.*]

(*Puts on her coat then calls.*) Momma ! Can you come !

[*Enter Momma.*]

MOMMA : Where's Sammy ?

ESTHER : Gone.

MOMMA : Gone ?

ESTHER : I asked him to go.

MOMMA : Esther !

ESTHER : Momma, I want to talk to you. Momma, you must forgive me. I'm. . . .

MOMMA : Why for have you got on your coat. You can't go out.

ESTHER : Momma, please. Listen. Jeff's on embarkation leave and I'm. . . .

MOMMA : What you say ?

ESTHER : No. Don't be shocked. And please don't be too upset because I'm going to tell you something to hurt you. I'm married, Momma. I married Jeff to-day. (*Pause.*) Please don't look at me like that.

I know I should have told you before and not given you a shock, but I didn't because I knew you'd stop me and I couldn't have borne that. (*Sobs.*) Momma, I know I'm a bad daughter, you don't ever have to forgive me, I can't expect you to, I don't want to hurt you, Momma, I don't want to hurt you. Please say something to me! (*Sobs uncontrollably.*)

MOMMA (*after a pause*): Why have you got on your coat?

ESTHER: Because I'm going to Jeff, Momma. Please stop looking at me like that. (*Covers face with hands.*)

[*Enter Poppa.*]

POPPA: What has happened? (*Goes to Esther and puts his arms round her.*) Don't cry, mine Esther. If you cannot love him we will understand. We only try to make things good for you. Don't cry, don't cry, mine little Esther.

ESTHER: No, don't touch me, you're going to hate me. I love you. Forgive me. (*Sobbing.*) Tell him, Momma, I can't.

POPPA: Tell him?

[*Pause.*]

MOMMA: Where will you live?

ESTHER (*surprised*): Here. He'll be away.

MOMMA: Here?

ESTHER: I don't know. I hadn't thought. Poppa—I married Jeff this afternoon, and he's being sent abroad some time this week. I hadn't thought about where I should live.

[*Long pause. Poppa slowly turns his back on her. Manny enters from upstairs, pauses, awed by the silence.*]

MANNY (*after a while*): Is Esther all right?

MOMMA: Go to bed, Manny.

[*Pause.*]

MANNY (*quietly*) : Are you all right, Esther ?
ESTHER : Yes.
POPPA (*angry*) : Did you hear your mother ! No. None of my children hear their parents. They go their own life. The parent is no one. Nothing. He has nothing to teach. Our children are born with great knowledge. Knowledge of how to live, knowledge of God's will. They do not need a parent, only for food or bed or shoes to wear, to tread their own path. Momma says go to bed. That is only Momma. She knows nothing. No, the child knows better. He can disobey. He can teach his parent how to live.
MOMMA (*quietly*) : Go to bed, Manny.

[*Manny goes. Another silence.*]

POPPA (*slowy*) : Keep her here for food and bed, but don't ask me to speak with her.
MOMMA : Perhaps—ach—perhaps she will leave him, or he will leave her, or perhaps even, he will be killed.
ESTHER (*shocked to the core*) : Momma !
POPPA (*angry*) : There is no perhaps to make it right. Mine daughter has turned her back on God. I tear her out of mine heart. Give her shelter and food like you would give to a diseased dog, from duty, because the dog is ill and does not know he is ill. But try to keep her from infecting mine children. An evil thing, that is all right, that is life. But a good thing that does bad—that is the hurt.
MOMMA : She is young.
POPPA (*shrugs his shoulders in silence. Hopelessly*) : Mine words do not want to speak.

[*Esther goes slowly to the door.*]

MOMMA (*loudly and firmly*) : You come back ?
ESTHER : Yes. I'll come back.

*Curtain*

# ACT THREE

*The street. February. As the curtain rises a snatch of "Lili Marlene" is heard on a barrel organ. Soon Esther and Reeny enter from the house, and close the door.*

REENY (*nodding in the direction of the room*): What an atmosphere! You could cut it with a knife.
ESTHER: Yes. Goodbye—have a good time.
REENY: You're not coming with us?
ESTHER: No.
REENY: No. I thought you wouldn't. To tell the truth, Esther, I ought to have been a spy. Really. You know why? Don't think I'm nosey, but I saw your letter to-day, I mean only the envelope, of course. And it's still got an English stamp on it. So he hasn't gone *yet?*

[*Esther shakes her head.*]

Well, really, this war. So slow! You say goodbye for ever, and what happens? Three months later you're still waving. No jokes, has he got leave at last?

[*Esther nods.*]

Really! What, now? Are you meeting him now?
ESTHER: In twenty minutes; at the docks. I must go. He may be early.
REENY (*in a rush*): Oh, I am thrilled. Give him my love. Will he be here to-night? I mean, are you going to stay with him to-night? How long's his leave for? Didn't you know till to-day?
ESTHER: I'll be late.
REENY: You know, one of these days I'm going to get a sore throat asking my own questions and guessing my own answers. Well, cheerio, darling.
ESTHER: I'll see you to-morrow and tell you. . . .
REENY: O.K. Cheerio.

[*Reeny goes. Esther starts to go and then stands still. Jeff has come.*]

ESTHER : Jeff ! (*Anxious*) : I'm not late ?
JEFF : No, I'm early.

[*They kiss.*]

How are you ?
ESTHER (*nods "yes"*) : You ?
JEFF : O.K. (*Pause.*) You got my letter then ?
ESTHER : Only just. This evening when I came in.
JEFF : I told you an hour late because I know what trains are. I didn't want you to be waiting.
ESTHER : You haven't been waiting an hour at the dock ?
JEFF : No. The train was only half an hour late. I couldn't stand waiting there so here I am. Can you spend to-night ?
ESTHER : I'll get my things.
JEFF : Not for a moment. Let me look at you a moment first.

[*Pause.*]

ESTHER : Jeff, I——
JEFF : I got something——
ESTHER : You tell me first.
JEFF : No, you—— Please.
ESTHER : I've been imagining all day how I'd tell you, and I don't know now.

[*Pause.*]

JEFF : I brought you some chocolate.
ESTHER (*takes it*) : Oh, thank you. I'm going to have a baby.
JEFF : What ?
ESTHER : I'm going to. . . .

[*Pause. They look at each other.*]

JEFF : Do you mind ?
ESTHER : I'm very happy.
JEFF : Really ?
ESTHER : Really. You ?
JEFF : I don't know what to say.
ESTHER : Are you pleased ?
JEFF : Yes. I haven't hardly got used to it yet. Does it make you feel ill ?
ESTHER : No. I'm fine. Don't be worried. I was very surprised at first, and I went to the hospital and they said " yes ". I've just written it to you.
JEFF : Every moment I can't believe it. That we'll have a baby.
ESTHER : It was a nice doctor.

[*Pause.*]

JEFF : I'm letting him come into the world without a home for him. It's foolish to want him so much and nothing to give him.
ESTHER : I felt a bit lonely about it yesterday, but only because it was new to me, and I wanted you to tell me what you think. And now you're here with me—the first time, do you know that, since we've been married. Maybe the war will be over before it's born, and then you can see it right from the beginning, and it would be a peace baby.
JEFF : I've no guarantee of getting my job back. But they're sure to want me. There's always room for drivers, if not with this lot, then with another. A baby. And where'll we live ? There're no rooms to be had. . . .
ESTHER : I'll be thinking. I'll be planning.
JEFF : Will I be able to feed and clothe him on army pay ? I keep saying " him ", but I mean " him " or

" her " which ever he is, only you can't call a thing like that " it ".

[*Esther laughs.*]

JEFF : For all the worry, I'm so excited I can't even talk straight.
ESTHER : I don't know about names, do you ?
JEFF : I don't like them fancy, I like them short. Especially if he's a boy. But you must choose. I'd love to write and tell Mum, but I don't know how she'd take it. She ought to be so proud of you. But she doesn't write now and I wouldn't ask her to see me.

[*Pause.*]

ESTHER : Manny's picture is finished.
JEFF : I pray there'll be no raids. Let the fighting be the war, but no more raids.
ESTHER : I have to go to the Labour Exchange next week to register. But if you're pregnant they don't call you up.
JEFF : I love you so much.
ESTHER : I can't believe seeing you. Just when I want you most. (*Pause.*) Poppa hardly speaks, and he's kept his word about not speaking to me at all.

[*Pause.*]

JEFF : Do they know ? (*Nods towards door.*)
ESTHER : Know what ? That you're on leave ? No, I haven't said.
JEFF : No, I mean about the baby.
ESTHER : I'll tell them to-night. I wanted you to hear first. I was going to wait till after you'd have got my letter. Jeff, I know you want me to invite you in, and I want to with all my heart—but it would do no good.

It would make you unhappy as well as them. We must wait.

JEFF : What for ?

ESTHER : I don't know. A miracle, perhaps.

JEFF : Essie.

[*They kiss.*]

ESTHER : You've got something to tell me. Remember ? Only mine came first.

JEFF : I'd forgotten.

ESTHER : Can't you remember ?

JEFF : I can remember all right. But I'd forgotten. Essie. . . . Mine's not good news like yours——

ESTHER : No ! When ?

JEFF : Any day.

ESTHER : Then again, like last time, we must say goodbye.

JEFF : I don't know how to.

ESTHER : Not yet. A few hours, haven't we ?

JEFF : I report at eleven to-morrow. I've got the address here.

ESTHER : A few hours.

JEFF (*kisses her*) : Get your case. It's getting dark. Let's go where there's lights, then I can see you better.

ESTHER : All right. (*Pause, they don't move.*)

JEFF : Write often, like you have been doing.

ESTHER : I promise. (*A pause.*) Come back.

JEFF : I promise.

ESTHER : I won't be long.

[*Esther goes into house. Jeff stays outside alone. In the room, Momma is washing clothes, Poppa is sewing and Manny is polishing shoes. We do not see Manny's picture because Momma has drawn the curtains across it so as not to splash it.*]

MOMMA : Back ? Why so soon back ?
ESTHER : I've come to fetch my case.
MOMMA : Esther ! You don't go away again ! Not to live ? You stay here !
ESTHER : No, no, Momma, it's all right. I'm not going away again. Only for to-night. Jeff's with me. (*Pause.*) He's outside. May I ask him to wait inside ? Only for a moment.
MOMMA : Haven't you hurt Poppa enough ? Must you go on with the hurt ?
ESTHER : I'm sorry. I'm sorry, Poppa ; I. . . .

[*Momma resumes washing. Esther goes up stairs. Pause. Manny goes to door. Sees Jeff.*]

MANNY : Hallo.
JEFF : Hallo.
MOMMA : Manny ! Come in ! Shut the door !

[*Manny goes indoors.*]

What for do you want to make unhappiness. Why for you not work at your lessons ?
MANNY : I'm doing the shoes.
MOMMA : Leave. I do the shoes when I finish the wash. Leave. Do the lessons.
MANNY : I haven't got much home-work.
MOMMA : Not much ? And the scholarship. What about the scholarship ?
MANNY : That's not till July.
MOMMA : How can you do scholarship in summer if you don't work in winter ?
MANNY : It's not very difficult.
MOMMA : Work. Do like Poppa tells you.

[*Re-enter Esther.*]

ESTHER : Good night, Momma. (*Kisses her.* Good [illegible] Manny.

MANNY : Good night, Esther.

[*Momma looks at Poppa. Pause.*]

ESTHER : Good night, Poppa. (*No reply.*)
MOMMA : Go. Go.

[*Esther goes. She goes quickly to Jeff. He puts his arm through hers. The barrel-organ plays in the distance, " Lili Marlene ". He leads her off.*]

MOMMA (*after a pause, dries her hands*) : You drive her away. Perhaps she doesn't come back. Perhaps she goes to Ben and Rosie. What a disgrace that Rosie should think I drive away mine own child. Or perhaps she goes again alone above the shop of Mrs Green. What a business was it to make her come back, to be looked after, and not alone with bombs coming. It's all right that you don't speak with her. Yes, I understand. You cannot speak with her. But why for can't you answer her when she tells you " Good night, Poppa " ? Do you want that she should stay away ? She knows that you tell me to keep her here. All right, I keep her here. And am I to keep here the baby, too ? In the summer there will be a baby. Maybe she don't know. Yesterday I look at her and I tell myself. To-morrow I tell her. Well, so what do we do ? Do we keep the baby ? Perhaps for the beginning. Only for the beginning. Ach—well . . . maybe in the summer the war is over, and the husband can take care of his baby. And if the war is not over ? (*Angry.*) The war will be over. The war *will* be over. Why do I worry from things which don't happen ?
MANNY : Momma, won't Esther be able to go to work if she's having a baby ?
MOMMA : Why aren't you in bed ?
MANNY : I'm just going to start home-work, Momma.
MOMMA : Go to bed, Manny.

MANNY : Please, I want to know . . . when the baby's born will Esther be able to go straight back to work ?

MOMMA : Always I talk in front of the children ! (*To Poppa.*) And who would talk if I don't talk, and who is there to talk in front from, but the children ! Bed, Manny.

MANNY (*quietly*) : Will you come up a moment with me, Momma. . . ?

MOMMA : I come. I come. . . .

[*Momma and Manny go up the stairs. Poppa is left alone. There is a pause. The lights fade. The barrel-organ plays faintly "Roll out the Barrel".*]

[*The lights go up on an April evening. Enter in street Reeny and Doreen.*]

REENY (*entering*) : She says he says he's got used to the heat, but he can't get used to the insects, and she says he says when the posts arrive and the names are called out you've no idea what it feels like. She says he says you can always tell which fellows haven't heard for some time—they get difficult and grumbling and seem to lose heart, isn't it awful ?

DOREEN : Oh, it's awful.

REENY : And he's told her she's not to stay on any longer at work, but she says she'd like to stay on. . . .

[*During the rest of Reeny's speech George enters and nonchalantly crosses the street whistling "Hang out your washing".*]

REENY : . . . as the assistant-manageress says she can stay on as long as she likes—(*to George as he passes between them*) You're out late. (*To Doreen*) and she says he says the *sand* !

DOREEN (*about George*) : Cheeky little so-and-so.

REENY (*continuing*): Gets into everything! Everything you eat, everything you drink. Isn't it awful?
DOREEN: Oh, it's awful.

[*For a second they both stand thinking how awful everything is.*]

REENY: Tt.
DOREEN: Tt.
REENY (*coming out of her reverie*): Well, cheerio then, Doreen.

[*Going into house.*]

DOREEN: Cheerio then, Reeny.

[*Going off P.*]

REENY: Cheerio!
DOREEN: Cheerio!

[*The lights fade as the barrel-organ comes nearer, and the lights come up on a hot summer day. Manny and Momma enter and go towards house, speaking. The barrel-organ stays distantly until later when they go into house.*]

MANNY: But I kept telling you and telling you, Momma.
MOMMA: Don't rush. Why you run away from me?
MANNY: I'm not rushing, Momma. Only we can't talk in the street.
MOMMA: It's too hot for rushing. You always tell me, "Momma, I don't do very good at school," when all the time you do good. And when you are top you don't tell till I ask. Then how should I believe you when you say "Momma, I won't get the scholarship." Poppa and me we both tell each other, "Manny will get his scholarship, take no notice from what he says."

[*She follows Manny into the house.*]

The teacher too says, " Emmanuel is very bright, why for he not get the scholarship." Read.

MANNY : I've read it to you, Momma.

MOMMA : Read again.

MANNY (*sighs. Takes letter from his pocket*) : " Dear Mrs Brodsky—— "

MOMMA : Why for should they take trouble to write to me like that if they don't think you should have it ? It is because from a teacher what don't like you, what make up his mind " Manny is very bright but I don't give him the scholarship."

MANNY : No, it *isn't*. The people who mark the exam papers don't even know us. It's because I didn't do the papers well.

MOMMA : To-morrow I go to the school and talk with them.

MANNY : No—please.

MOMMA : Yes, I go.

MANNY : Please, please, I don't want you to go.

MOMMA : Not to worry. I put it right.

MANNY : Look, Momma, I'll tell you, only you must promise not to go to the school, and not to tell Poppa.

MOMMA : What not to tell Poppa ?

MANNY (*hesitates*) : I did the exams badly on purpose.

MOMMA : That's not true.

MANNY : It is. I didn't want to win the scholarship.

MOMMA : Ach, that's not true. Two years ago when you was clever and was going to do the scholarship, you wanted to so much.

MANNY : I did then, yes. (*Walks round room, thoughtfully picking the furniture.*)

MOMMA : So much you wanted it. And when you had to go to hospital because from being ill so long,

and you couldn't go to school, you cried and cried because you was missing doing the scholarship.
MANNY : Then, yes. It was different then. I was young.
MOMMA : You was so happy when they say you can do it later.

[*Esther enters from the bedroom.*]

MANNY : Hello, Esther.
ESTHER : Hallo.
MOMMA : Then why you change now ?

[*Manny shrugs and goes off to bedroom.*]

(*Follows him.*) It's not true you change, Manny ?

[*Reeny and Sammy come along the street. Esther sits and writes. Re-reads some letters beside her.*]

SAMMY : No, I won't come in. I just wanted to find out how she was. I'm glad I met you. I don't want to see her. Only to find out how she is.
REENY : O.K. then.
SAMMY : Is everything fixed for her ? I mean the hospital and everything ?
REENY : Oh, yes. They're expecting her.
SAMMY : If you want me, you will come and ask me, won't you ? Or if there's anything she wants.
REENY : Oh, I'll be seeing you anyway one of these fine raids, I expect.
SAMMY : No, I really meant if you want anything the next few days. I shan't be here after next week.
REENY : No ?
SAMMY : Called up at last.
REENY : Really ?
SAMMY : Yes. My fourth medical. At last.
REENY : You can't tell me you're pleased.
SAMMY : In a way, no. I hate it. On the other hand I

hated not being called up too. And in a way I'm relieved.

REENY : I'll tell her.

SAMMY : No, don't bother. Please. Please don't tell her, I mean, don't bother to keep it from her either, it's not important. I mean, I don't think she'll be interested one way or the other.

REENY : All right then, I'll just leave it.

SAMMY : Thank you.

REENY : Cheerio, then. (*Turns to go.*)

SAMMY : Reeny. . . . I. . . .

REENY : Yes ?

SAMMY : I would like to say something to her. Something I can't very well say in a message.

REENY : Oh, private.

SAMMY : Well. . . .

REENY : Oh, that's quite all right. Don't mind me. Come in. She's bound to be in, I should think.

SAMMY : Just for a moment then. . . .

REENY (*entering*) : Look who's here, Esther.

ESTHER (*rising*) : Oh, hallo, Sammy.

ESTHER : How are you ?

SAMMY : How are you ?

SAMMY : Just wanted to know if you were all right.

REENY : He's got something pretty private to say, so I'll make myself scarce.

[*She goes into bedroom.*]

SAMMY : I didn't intend to come. I was going to write a note, and at the last minute. . . .

ESTHER : Please—don't be shy, Sammy. I'm pleased you're here.

SAMMY : I wanted to look at you. Just for a moment.

ESTHER : I look dreadful.

SAMMY : No . . . no. That wasn't only why I came. . . . I mean. . . .

ESTHER : Sit down.

SAMMY : No thanks, I'm in rather a hurry. I only happened to be passing and thought. . . .

ESTHER : Have you spoken to Poppa since. . . .

SAMMY : No. I tried. I failed miserably. I was no use at all.

ESTHER : Oh.

SAMMY : Could I perhaps. . . .

ESTHER : What, Sammy ?

SAMMY : Now I've come to say it I feel stupid.

ESTHER (*laughs*) : Say it.

SAMMY : It's only, if, when your baby comes, you need to buy things. . . . I don't know what one buys for babies, but things, nappies perhaps . . . doesn't one ?

ESTHER : Yes. Things like that.

SAMMY : Well, would you ask me for money if you hadn't enough, or didn't like to ask your father ?

ESTHER : Yes, Sammy, I would. Thank you.

SAMMY : You could look on it as borrowed if you liked, just until——

ESTHER : Thank you for. . . .

SAMMY : Excuse me, I'm terribly late for. . . . I've got a . . . excuse me. . . . I'm so sorry I. . . . Goodbye. Excuse me rushing.

[*He goes, as Reeny enters.*]

REENY : Can I come in ? *Thank* you. Well, I must say, men in love ! As a matter of fact he only said it was a secret so as to get a chance of seeing you alone. Because he'd already told me when he met me that he'd been called up. All that commotion ! You'd think he was the only man ever to go into the army ! Nice, though. Stood me a cup of tea and was quite

charming. Nice manners. I should think he was quite a nice fellow before he fell in love.

[*Esther is writing.*]

Don't let me interrupt you. (*Starting to wash her hands and make up her face.*) I'm off. Only for half an hour. I promised Mum I wouldn't be out late. We haven't seen Sammy for months. Not since Jeff went overseas. Months ago. Writing to him? Don't let me interrupt you. Give him my love. You don't look too good. Are you all right?

ESTHER: Yes, I'm all right.

REENY: Isn't it hot? Never mind, soon be over now. (*To her reflection in the mirror.*) Not long now, my girl, before you'll be Auntie Reeny.

ESTHER: He hasn't had my last two letters.

REENY: Oh, I say, how awful. Was there anything important in them? Don't think I'm nosey, but you had two this morning, didn't you?

ESTHER: Yes.

REENY: Well, that can happen the other end too. Probably by now he's got your two at once.

ESTHER: Yes. Perhaps. I do hope so.

REENY: Stuck for news? Tell him I'm making a coat for the baby half pink, half blue. So it doesn't matter if it's a boy or a girl it won't be offended.

[*Esther is not listening. Reading one of Jeff's letters.*]

REENY: How is he?

ESTHER: They've been on the move for some days, that's why posts haven't caught up. I'm almost relieved he can't see me, I look so fat and ugly.

REENY: Nonsense. I think it suits you. What does he say? Anything more about that lizard?

ESTHER: Yes. (*Reads.*) "I've adopted Mopsey and take her with me in a box. She doesn't seem to mind

travelling, and although there's always lizards wherever we stop, to eat up insects for us, I've got affection for this one, so I kept her. She blinks her eyes when I talk to her."

REENY : Well, I never. Go on.

ESTHER (*reads*) : " The evenings get suddenly cold without warning. Like the darkness which doesn't come slowly, but takes you quickly from bright light to blackness. . . "

REENY : Excuse my saying so, but you're leaving out all the interesting bits, aren't you ?

ESTHER : No. The rest is only personal.

REENY : That's what I mean. How does he sign himself ?

[*Esther starts writing again.*]

Joyce says you can always tell a man by the way he signs himself. Maurice used to sign himself " Yours " when he wrote to her. She thought that was wonderful till she found he signed the same thing to the Ministry of Labour. What do you put ? " Lots of love and kisses " ?

ESTHER : Something like that.

REENY : Sorry. Didn't mean to interrupt. I'm off. See you later. Keep your pecker up.

MOMMA : (*off; simultaneously*) But if it's true that you don't do the exams good—why don't you do them good ?

[*Reeny goes. Then Momma and Manny enter from bedroom, talking.*]

MOMMA : Manny, tell.

MANNY (*grudgingly*) : If I got a scholarship I'd have to go on schooling for another two years.

MOMMA : That is what you want, Manny. What we all want for you.

MANNY : Not what I want.

MOMMA : You don't want !

MANNY : I want to start earning.

MOMMA : Not if you can get a scholarship, Manny.

MANNY : I want to start earning.

MOMMA : Poppa and me had such hopes for you. Since you first went to school and did good. We wanted different for you. Not to have to work hard like Poppa with nothing to show, but to wait till the brain was older and could understand bigger work. To work with the brain, Manny, and do good from it.

MANNY (*whispers*) : There'll be the baby.

MOMMA : There is a father what must keep her baby. That is not for you, Manny.

MANNY : Don't go on, Momma. It's done. I know what I want.

MOMMA : Ach, Manny, you throw away the whole what Poppa and me had planned for you. You throw away without telling until too late.

MANNY : I can go on learning without staying at school for it. You don't have to stop thinking because you leave school.

ESTHER : Momma.

MOMMA (*looks at Esther*) : Manny, bring the suitcase what is packed by the bed. And pack on top, for Esther, her things from washing, and hair brush.

[*He rushes to bedroom.*]

Don't kill yourself, there's not such big hurry.

ESTHER : I don't think it's the right sort of pain. My back.

MOMMA : That's right. That's good. We go. No hurry. I help you with the coat.

ESTHER : Will they let you wait at the hospital ?

MOMMA : Of course I wait, what you think. Maybe even they let me see you. All the time I will be there, downstairs in the hospital. It won't be long, not to worry.
MANNY (*rushes in*) : Shall I try and get a taxi ?
ESTHER : No, I'm fine. It's near. We'll walk.
MANNY : I'll come, and bring the case.
MOMMA : No. I take it. Stay here. Tell Poppa when he comes I'll be back with the good news.
MANNY : How long will you be ?
MOMMA : Not long. Not to worry.
ESTHER : I've left my hanky.
MANNY : I'll get it.

[*Exit.*]

ESTHER : My letter.
MOMMA : Manny will look after it.
ESTHER : No. I want to address it now.
MOMMA : Manny will post it. Not to worry. (*Calls.*) Manny !
MANNY (*from off*) : I can't find it.
MOMMA : I find it.
[*Exit Momma. Enter Manny.*]

ESTHER : Manny, will you post this for me ?
MANNY : Of course.
ESTHER : Just a sec.

[*Licks envelope. There is a knock at the street door. Manny opens it. Enter George slowly with a War Office envelope. His face is tear-stained. Esther stands.*]

(*Very loudly.*) What are you doing here ? NO !
GEORGE (*holding out telegram to Esther*) : Mum's had this. It said Mrs Smith, but it's for you.
MOMMA (*appearing*) : Who are you ? (*Suspecting what it may be.*) Go away. Get out. Go away.

[*Esther holds out her hand for the telegram. George moves towards her. Momma tries to intervene, but Esther snatches the telegram and reads it. There is a long silence while she stares at it. Then Momma puts her arms round her. George then leaves the room quietly and stands in the street with his arm over his eyes.*]

Manny, get a taxi.

[*Exit Manny with the suitcase.*]

ESTHER (*she has not moved*) : I don't want to live.

MOMMA : Esther, Esther, my darling. Come. Come. Come. (*Leads her to sofa.*) Momma is with you. Momma is here.

ESTHER (*hysterical*) : I don't want to live. I don't want to live.

MOMMA : No, no, mine little one, hush. Momma loves you.

ESTHER : I don't want to live.

MOMMA : Listen, my baby. Mine little one, listen to Momma. Not any more for my sake I ask you to live, but for your own sake and for the baby. Live how you will, Esther ; let the baby be what you will, teach him to be like his father. Yes, yes, I will understand ; only live, mine little one. Momma wants you to live for your life, not for her. For you. Esther. . . . Jeff too will want you to live. To give life to his baby. Part of him will live for you in his child. We will love the baby, Esther. We will love too the part that is his father. Give Momma a chance to love the baby, Esther. Forgive.

[*Esther makes a movement of pain.*]

Stay, mine darling. I see if the taxi is here. Momma will be with you. Stay a moment.

[*Goes into street and off.*]

ESTHER (*alone*): I don't want to live without him. God, let him have had a quick end with no pain. God, allow him to have read my last two letters before he died. (*Sobs.*) Jeff—Jeff, I love you. Come back. Come back. You promised.

MANNY (*entering*): Got one.

[*Momma and Manny enter house. She puts arms round Esther and leads her off.*]

ESTHER (*continues*): Everything goes at such a speed. I can't keep up. I can't. You said it won't be yet. Not yet. A few hours more. Must you go yet? Just when I want you most.

MOMMA (*slowly, gently*): Come. . . . Come. . . . Momma is with you. Momma won't leave you. Not to think. Lean on Momma . . . more . . . more . . . Come . . . come. . . .

[*Momma and Esther have gone.*]

MANNY (*to George*): How long does it take a baby to be born?

GEORGE: Nine months.

MANNY: No, I mean now. Being born.

GEORGE: I don't know. Jeff's dead.

MANNY: Yes. I'm sorry.

GEORGE: Yes.

[*Manny slowly goes into house. The lights fade. A foghorn sounds in the distance. Fade up in the room. A slight glow from the range. Poppa is in the chair by it. Reeny and Manny are on the sofa.*]

REENY (*after a while, whispers*): What's the time, Manny?

MANNY (*whispers*): I can't see.

REENY: Turn on the light.

[*He does so. The blackout is up, showing the finished picture.*]

MANNY : Half past four.
REENY : Oh, God, I wish someone would come. Do you think Sammy found Momma at the hospital ?
MANNY : I don't know.
REENY : I'm glad I fetched him, but I wish he'd come back.
MANNY : How long could it take ?
REENY : There's no telling. Sometimes they come before you can say Jack Robinson, and sometimes they draw it out for days. Doreen took two whole days when she was being born ; and she weighed twelve pounds when she did make up her mind to come. Only a little woman her mother is too.
MANNY : I'm going to see if there's anyone coming. (*Opens door.*) Hallo, what are you doing here ?
GEORGE (*on the pavement, yawns*) : I'm waiting for the baby.
MANNY : Why are you waiting out here ?
GEORGE : I'm waiting for the baby.
MANNY : Poppa, it's George, may he come in ? (*No reply.*) Come inside.
GEORGE : I don't want to go in. She told me to go away.
MANNY : Momma's not here, she's at the hospital.
REENY : Don't be frightened. Come in.

[*George enters ; yawns.*]

How long have you been out there ?
GEORGE : I don't know.
REENY : Does your Mum know you're out ?
GEORGE : She wants to know about the baby.
REENY : Won't she be worried about you ?
GEORGE : Not until it gets dark.

REENY : You must have been asleep ! It's been dark and getting light again. It's to-morrow now.
GEORGE : Oh.
REENY : Hadn't you better go home ?
GEORGE : I want to wait for the baby.
REENY : You look worn out. Sit down on the sofa a bit.

[*There is a soft knock at the door. Reeny and Manny spring to open it. It is Sammy. He is in warden's uniform.*]

MANNY : Where's Momma ? What's happened ?
REENY : Weren't you with her ?
MANNY : What's the matter ?
REENY : Isn't it over ? What's happening to Esther ?
MANNY : Why didn't you stay ?
SAMMY : Your Momma sent me away. Nearly two hours ago. They were afraid for her strength. She'd got permission to see her. Against the rules. They didn't want anyone to see her. The baby was born long before. Midnight.
MANNY : Can't you go back ?
SAMMY : Yes, yes, if you want me to.
REENY : No, don't go.
SAMMY : They don't tell you anything. One just sits in a corridor.
REENY : Don't go back. Stay here, please stay here.

[*Manny runs out.*]

I can't bear it. I want Esther. I want her. (*Weeps.*)
SAMMY : Momma will be back soon. Have courage, Reeny.
REENY (*sobs*) : Esther.
SAMMY (*sees George*) : Who are you ?
GEORGE : I'm waiting for Jeff's baby.
SAMMY : Are you his brother ?
GEORGE : Yes.

SAMMY : It's a boy. You've got a nephew. I don't know your name.
GEORGE : George.
SAMMY : You've got a nephew, George.
GEORGE : I'll tell Mum.

[*Exit.*]

REENY : Where's Manny ?
SAMMY : Must have gone to the hospital.
REENY : Please ! Please ! Take me there !
POPPA : I did not speak with her.

[*Pause. Reeny is hushed.*]

I did not speak with her.
SAMMY : I think she understood.
POPPA : I understand. Perhaps too late.
SAMMY : Never too late.
POPPA : Not for me, an old man, but perhaps for her.
SAMMY : The child.
POPPA : Not too late for him. I believe in the belief of my fathers. The chosen people. God asks his people to multiply among themselves, not to marry with people who worship strange gods, but only Him. But in the night when the heart is breaking I hear Esther's voice telling me from far back, " Isn't a good man a good man no matter if his parents was chosen or not ? " and when I let myself listen to the voice of mine child, I tremble in front of God, because He forbids me to listen. Yes, our God is a jealous God. He will take mine Esther from me the night I first listen to her. I am weak, and I say to God, " I want to open mine heart to a baby whose father is not Your chosen, and in mine weakness I will do it." And I pray to God to forgive me, because I can do no other. Mine God will have vengeance on me, and I can do no other.

SAMMY : Perhaps, after all, it is His will that you should listen to her.

POPPA : No, Sammy. That would be to say to God, " Please be on mine side, because I am too weak to be on yours." That is not to listen to God. Abraham, he had the strength. He did not listen to his boy Isaac, who pleaded with him for his life. Abraham listened only to God. And in the last minute God saved his boy Isaac for him, because he was willing to part with him for God. Yes, even willing to part with his son. But I am weak, and at the last minute I listen to mine daughter, Esther, instead of to God. And He will take mine Esther from me for punishment.

SAMMY : But suppose God wished us to live nearer our Christian neighbours—how else would He tell us ?

POPPA : What a riddle is God ! Maybe He takes mine Esther from me because I don't listen to her ; maybe because at the last minute I do. He tells me I do wrong ; but which wrong I don't know. I don't know. (*Pause.*) You too love mine Esther.

[*There is a sound outside. All three rise. Enter Momma and Manny.*]

MOMMA (*rushes to Poppa and embraces him*) : It's all right ! She will be all right ! It's all right ! Mine Esther will live. Everything will be all right. Not to worry. Everything is all right. Mine Esther is all right.

[*Reeny flings herself on the sofa and sobs with relief. Sammy goes out unnoticed. Momma sits and mops her face. Poppa sits and nods his head.*

POPPA (*whispers*) : God keeps his riddle, but He lets me keep mine Esther.

MOMMA (*quietly*): It's all right. (*To Poppa.*) Special permission. You can see her to-morrow. She asks for you.

[*Poppa nods.*]
Reeny. Manny. Come.

[*They sit at her feet.*]

They let me be with her. I talked with her. She listened to me. She listened to Momma, and she will be all right. They let me see the baby. Fat. Good and fat. A fat boy. (*To Poppa.*) Very like Ben. I think he will be clever. He looks very clever. To-morrow you talk to Ben. (*To the children.*) What you think. A baby, hm?

POPPA: Momma. There was here to-night a boy like Manny, who want to make the baby happy too. Is it possible to mix?

REENY: Jeff's brother, Momma. George.

POPPA: His mother has lost a child to-day. What do we do for our children when they live? We make a mess. Are we going to make a mess with the new life, with the baby?

MOMMA: What you want for their happiness, is not always their happiness. He must live happy.

POPPA: I think so too. And I think for him to live happy we must talk good with his father's mother. For Esther's sake, hm? (*Nods.*) Yes, yes, God is only a riddle if I try to make His answer the same to all. Maybe what would be sin against God in me, would not be sin against God in Esther. To sin against God, one must sin against oneself.

MOMMA: You know what Esther want to call the baby? George Emanuel, for the brother and Manny both. I think Emanuel George sounds better.

[*George comes down street, knocks. Manny goes to the door.*]

GEORGE (*from outside*) : Is she there ?
MANNY : Yes. Come in.
GEORGE : No. Give her a message.
POPPA : Come in. Come in.

[*George enters warily.*]

What message ? Tell. Not to be frightened.
MOMMA : Don't go away. Come nearer. Nearer.

[*George comes slowly towards her.*]

A message for me ?

[*He nods.*]
From your Momma ? (*He nods again.*) She want to see the new baby ? (*Another nod.*) Then best we meet and talk good about it, hm ?
GEORGE : That's the message. When ?
POPPA (*to Momma*) : To-morrow ?
MOMMA : To-morrow. Or the day after to-morrow.
POPPA (*firmly*) : To-morrow.

*Curtain*

# WHO GOES THERE!

*by*

*JOHN DIGHTON*

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*Applications to perform this play professionally (other than in repertory) should be made to Henry Sherek, 40 Pall Mall, London, S.W.1 Applications by repertory companies and for licence for representation by amateurs should be made to Samuel French Ltd., 26 Southampton Street, London, W.C.2, or to Samuel French Inc., 25 West 45th Street, New York, U.S.A. or their agents. No performance may take place unless this licence has been obtained.*

Henry Sherek presented *Who Goes There!* at the Vaudeville Theatre on April 4th, 1951, and transferred to the Duke of York's Theatre on May 4th, 1951, with the following cast:

| | |
|---|---|
| ALEX CORNWALL | *Frances Rowe* |
| LANGLEY | *Trevor Reid* |
| MILES CORNWALL | *Nigel Patrick* |
| SIR RALPH CORNWALL | *H. G. Stoker* |
| GUY ASHLEY | *Anthony Sharp* |
| ARTHUR CRISP | *Victor Adams* |
| CHRISTINA DEED | *Geraldine McEwan* |

Directed by John Counsell

Décor by Hal Henshaw

During the run Beatrice Campbell took over the part of Alex Cornwall.

The play ran for 222 performances.

*Who Goes There!* was first staged by the Windsor Repertory Company.

# CHARACTERS

(in order of their appearance)

ALEX CORNWALL

LANGLEY

MILES CORNWALL

SIR RALPH CORNWALL

GUY ASHLEY

ARTHUR CRISP

CHRISTINA DEED

# SCENES

*The Lobby Room of Archery House,*
*St. James's Palace*

## ACT ONE

*Morning—and that evening*

## ACT TWO

*An hour later*

## ACT THREE

*Next morning*

*For*

*KATHLEEN*

# ACT ONE

*Scene : The Lobby Room of Archery House, St. James's Palace, is a charming ground-floor room of dignified proportions. In the middle of the right-hand wall a window looks out on to the street. Opposite to it, and flanked on either side by bookshelves, is the fireplace. In the centre of the back wall, a second window, in a slight bay, looks out past a street lamp upon a view of battlemented buildings across one of the palace courts. To the right of this window double doors lead into the hall. In the hall, opposite the double doors, is a swing door to the kitchen quarters. A little to the right of this swing door the bottom of the staircase can be seen leading up to the first floor. The front door of the house is off to the right, along the hall. To the left of the back window in the Lobby Room is the small lobby which gives the room its name, balancing the hall in position but much smaller. It is just large enough to contain a small table at one side, and in its back wall is a door giving on to the court outside. The top half of this door has small glass panes.*

*Under the right-hand window of the room there is a small table with a telephone on it, and upstage of the table, in the corner, a cabinet with drinks in it. Downstage of the window, a comfortable armchair. There is a settee down centre, with a low tapestry stool to the right of it, and immediately above the settee, another table with some newspapers and a handsome bowl of flowers.*

*Above the fireplace, left, a wing chair, with a lamp nearby on top of the bookshelves. Between the chair and the fireplace, a cabinet radio.*

*An atmosphere of taste and comfort.*

*As the curtain rises, the room is empty. The double doors to the hall are open and both windows, which are of the sash type, are open at the bottom. The sun is shining*

*outside and a military band, playing a regimental march, can be heard faintly in the distance.*

*Alex Cornwall, a good-looking young woman in the late twenties, comes fairly rapidly down the stairs. She pushes open the swing door to the kitchen quarters and calls through. . . .*

ALEX: Bring them in now, will you, Langley?

[*Without waiting for an answer, she comes purposefully into the Lobby Room, crosses to the table above the settee and clears it, taking the flowers and moving them to the mantelpiece. As she does so, Langley, a prim-looking manservant of about forty, comes through the swing door. He is carrying a pair of kitchen scales, of the pointer variety, and seems a little concerned about it.*]

(*indicating table above settee*) Put them on there. And bring in Mr. Miles's cases—I'll see to them.

LANGLEY (*coming into doorway and hesitating*): I can easily do them myself, Miss Alex, in the kitchen, or upstairs or elsewhere. . . .

ALEX: I'd much rather you finished my father's.

[*She crosses to the telephone table. Langley reluctantly comes down to centre table and puts down the scales, hastily sliding a newspaper under them. Alex is taking note-pad and pencil from drawer of the telephone table.*]

LANGLEY: I do beg your pardon, Miss Alex. . . .

ALEX: It doesn't matter—there's still plenty of time.

[*She is turning away, with pad and pencil, when the telephone rings. She turns back again, mildly exasperated, and answers it.*]

(*into telephone*) Hullo? (*in friendly tone*) Oh, Anne. . . .

[*Langley goes out into the hall, disappearing to the right. The military band outside is getting nearer.*]

. . . is it all right for to-night ? Oh, that's sweet of you. . . .

[*The band, suddenly much nearer, drowns the end of the the speech.*]

(*louder, into telephone*) I said " that's sweet of you."

[*The band is now immediately outside the window*]

(*into telephone, louder still*) Just a minute.

[*She pulls down the bottom of the window. The band continues, muffled.*]

ALEX (*into telephone*) : I'm so sorry. No, it's only the new guard coming on. What I said was that it was sweet of you to have me. Yes, he's off this morning. And Father's got to go down to Windsor, so I'd be alone in the house.

[*The band is outside the back window now and drowns her again. She breaks off in some desperation as Langley comes in from hall, carrying two air-travel cases.*]

Langley, would you mind. . . ?
[*She waves her hand towards back window. Langley puts down cases and closes the window. The band is muffled again.*]

(*into telephone*) Anne, are you still there ? (*Laughs*) Yes, aren't you glad you live next to a nice quiet fire station ?

[*Langley puts down larger case on stool by settee and unclasps it. Stands the other at the side. He goes out and upstairs. The band outside has now stopped playing.*]

(*into telephone*) Well, Miles's plane goes at twelve-thirty, but I've got the rest of the day off. Oh, I think the Air Ministry will survive without me. All right, straight from Heath Row. That'll be perfect. Do what? (*amused*) I very much doubt it.

[*The front door closes, outside.*]

MILES (*off, in hall*): Alex. . . .
ALEX (*into telephone*): He's just coming in—d'you want me to ask him? (*Laughs*) All right, Anne—see you later, then. . . .

[*Miles Cornwall enters from hall. He is a man of attractive personality, a year or two older than Alex. He is wearing a check travelling suit and carrying a couple of small but heavy parcels.*]

MILES (*slightly exasperated*): What in the name of Heaven has now happened to my luggage? I thought Langley had . . . (*seeing cases*) Oh.
ALEX (*ringing off*): That was Anne. She wants to know if you're going to start your duties by proposing to Podgy Cartwright.
MILES: I wouldn't propose to Podgy Cartwright if hers were the last thirteen stone on earth. (*Indicating parcels*) I want to put these . . . (*Seeing scales*) What's going on here?
ALEX (*crossing to him*): A little chore that Langley forgot when he packed for you, so now I've got to do it.
MILES: That's what sisters are for.
ALEX: Make yourself useful, will you?

[*Holds out pad and pencil.*]

MILES (*dropping parcels on settee*): Do I ever do anything but?

[*He takes pad and pencil.*]

ALEX (*opening lid of larger case*): Yes. Anything but.

[*She takes an armful of conspicuously warm-looking clothes from the case and puts them on centre table.*]

MILES: I'll have you know that, at the Foreign Office, I'm considered a first-rate Fourth Secretary.
ALEX: Possibly. I suppose you forgot to tell Langley that you were going by air.
MILES: Well, dammit, he can't think I'm starting out with this amount of luggage for two years for the fun of it, can he? I don't suppose the trunks will ever arrive. What are you weighing all this stuff for?
ALEX: Because they'll only accept you on this flight if your luggage is strictly within weight. (*weighing shirts on scales*) Shirts—four pounds six ounces.
MILES: Two years. In Baffin Bay. Heaven help me.
ALEX (*indicating pad*): Miles.
MILES (*writing*): Shirts—four pounds six ounces.
ALEX (*weighing thick sweater*): Sweater—one pound three ounces. Amazing. I don't think she's entirely got it out of her system even yet.
MILES (*writing*): Who hasn't? Got what?
ALEX: Anne. You. (*Weighs thick pants.*)
MILES: Don't talk rubbish—that was just a passing thing. And it passed, over eighteen months ago.
ALEX: For you, yes. You know, one of these days you'll meet some girl and the boot'll be on the other foot.
MILES: Don't you believe it.
ALEX: And you'll receive an emotional kick just where it'll hurt most. Pants—ten ounces.
MILES (*writing*): You're quite wrong. Fortunately for me, I only get really fond of girls of a right

thinking kind. Not that I expect to be very strongly tempted during the next two years. Five degrees short of the Arctic Circle, I should think it'll be hard to feel much affection for anything. Even a penguin.

ALEX: There are no penguins in the Arctic Circle.

MILES: Well, there you are to start with.

ALEX (*weighing thick woollen socks*): Socks, one pound six ounces.

MILES: Apart from which the opportunities won't be exactly enormous. Fourteen hundred Esquimeaux. Five hundred poor devils in the R.A.F. And on behalf of the all-knowing, all-seeing, all-embracing Foreign Office—me.

ALEX: Aren't you forgetting Podgy Cartwright?

MILES: Trying to.

[*Alex by now has finished with the contents of the larger case and is opening the smaller one.*]

(*picking up parcels from settee*) Can you get these in somewhere? (*Weighs smaller of two parcels*) Four pounds.

ALEX (*aghast*): What! Must you?

MILES: I must. (*Unwrapping parcel*) Present for the Air Vice-Marshal. If I've got to be attached to the old blighter, I intend to arrive, at least, loaded with goodwill. (*Exposing contents*) There we are.

ALEX (*staring*): What is it?

MILES: Ashtray—made out of the House of Commons.

ALEX: You can't possibly take that.

MILES: Why not? I think he'll be interested. He's been known to suggest a lot of other things they could do with the House of Commons. (*Unwrapping second parcel*) And here we have Gray's *Anatomy*. (*Discloses book.*)

ALEX: What on earth for?

MILES: Podgy. I thought it might remind her to do something about hers. (*As Alex gives him a look*) Well, if I'm taking her father something . . . she always used to like instructive reading. (*Weighs book, which sends scales down heavily*) Six pounds three ounces. (*He starts to note it down on pad.*)

ALEX (*taking pad from him*): We'll see about those when all the necessities have gone in. (*Gives him heavy long boots.*) Fur-lined boots.

MILES (*bitterly*): Fur-lined boots! (*weighing*) Seven pounds ten ounces.

[*Alex gives him slippers and tin of tobacco.*]

MILES (*weighing resignedly*): Pair of slippers—one pound twelve ounces. Pound of tobacco—three and a half ounces. (*He reacts and weighs tin of tobacco again. Opens it and looks inside*) I knew I should never have put Father on to this. (*Starts to fill pipe from tin.*) You know I wouldn't put it past him to have invented this trip to Windsor—just to avoid seeing me off.

ALEX: He couldn't have invented a regimental sports followed by an all-Boy-Scout performance of "Macbeth" in modern dress.

MILES: No, I suppose not. I can't think who could.

[*He goes to mantelpiece for matches. Alex continues weighing and noting down for herself.*]

ALEX: Still, I admit he does hate seeing anyone off.

MILES: If he prefers to sit to attention all afternoon and then be prepared all evening, he certainly must.

ALEX: You can't really blame the poor old thing—when you think of the amount of it he has to do. He had to go to a Memorial Service at ten-thirty this morning.

MILES (*nodding*): I suppose that was seeing someone off, too, in a way. Is he back?

ALEX: No, but he'll have to be back soon—he's leaving at twelve. (*Finds silk dressing-gown and pyjamas in smaller case.*) How on earth did these get in here?

MILES: I told Langley to put them in.

ALEX: D'you think they're strictly suitable? Five degrees short of the Arctic Circle?

MILES: Hang it, I'm bound to get leave some time. I visualise a nice week-end or two in Quebec—at the Chateau Frontenac.

ALEX: The Chateau Frontenac is not that kind of hotel.

MILES: Well, it very soon will be. Go on—weigh them.

(*He takes them out of her hand and puts them on the scales, with a firm look. The door in the lobby opens and Sir Ralph Cornwall enters. He is a small, good-natured man of about sixty. He is wearing morning dress and carrying a brief case and a small parcel.*]

SIR RALPH: Alex . . . (*Sees her.*) Ah, there you are.

[*He deposits brief-case on lobby table and comes in.*]

MILES: Hullo, Father—how was the funeral?

SIR RALPH: Deadly. (*Seeing clothes and scales.*) What's happening in here? (*to Alex*) Has Langley done my packing?

ALEX: Doing it now.

MILES: I saw "Macbeth" once in modern dress. It was wonderful.

SIR RALPH (*brightening a little*): Oh, was it?

MILES: I laughed almost continuously. Of course, I knew someone who was in it.

ALEX: And she wasn't a Boy Scout.
MILES (*giving her a look*): She was a witch.
ALEX (*giving him one back*): I bet she was.

[*Sir Ralph looks a little bewildered.*]

SIR RALPH: I don't know what you two are talking about. (*To Alex.*) Does Langley know I'll want my uniform?
ALEX: I told him.
SIR RALPH: I won't go down in it, so he'll have to pack it.
ALEX: I'll go up and make sure. (*At door, to Miles.*) Don't you touch anything.

[*She goes out and upstairs.*]

SIR RALPH: Well, Miles—sorry I shan't be able to see you off.
MILES: That's all right, Father—don't worry too much about it.
SIR RALPH: If it had been any other day in the year . . . but you know what it is—months ago I gave these people a promise. . . .
MILES: I know what it is.
SIR RALPH: I wanted a chance to have a word with you.
MILES: Never mind. . . .
SIR RALPH: That's why I sent Alex upstairs.
MILES: Oh.
SIR RALPH: By the way—brought you this, for the trip. Some of that tobacco. (*Hands him parcel.*)
MILES (*taking it wryly*): Thanks very much, Father.
SIR RALPH: As you know, I've never believed in parents interfering in their children's lives. I've always left you and Alex to make your own mistakes—haven't I?

MILES: Yes, Father—thanks very much.

[*He absently weighs parcel of tobacco on the scales.*]

SIR RALPH: Of course, Alex hasn't made very many. However . . . (*Sees Miles weighing tobacco and stares.*)

[*Miles realises and hastily takes parcel off scales.*]

However, in the matter of this new post of yours, I think it's only fair to let you know that I had a hand in it.

MILES (*who is unwrapping tobacco*): In Baffin Bay? (*Looks at Sir Ralph reproachfully.*]

SIR RALPH (*nodding*): There was some talk, apparently, of your being sent to Washington——

MILES: Washington!

SIR RALPH: However, I managed to pull a few strings. . . .

MILES (*looking at him appalled*): You stopped me going to America?

SIR RALPH: I felt obliged to do it for patriotic reasons.

[*Miles reacts.*]

As you doubtless know, Miles, Anglo-American relations at the moment are extremely good.

MILES: I don't see why my arrival should have made them any the worse.

SIR RALPH: You don't? Give me a fill of that tobacco, will you? (*Takes tin from Miles and starts to fill pipe.*) They were talking about you, I gather, at dinner the other night in Grosvenor Square. General Shoemaker said that you were a capable, energetic young man who might go far.

MILES: How right he was.

SIR RALPH (*dryly*): His daughter added that you were also what is apparently known as a wolf.
MILES: With her I must have gone too far. Or not far enough.
SIR RALPH: She's a very attractive girl, I believe.
MILES: Yes, she is.
SIR RALPH: And I've no reason to suppose that other American girls are not equally attractive.
MILES: No, I suppose not.
SIR RALPH: And I consider that our ambassador over there has quite enough on his hands already, trying to open the doors of the Americans to our exports, without having to—to. . . .
MILES: Keep the wolf from their daughters.
SIR RALPH: Exactly. (*Sharply.*) I'm serious, Miles.
MILES (*soberly*): Not more than I am, Father.
SIR RALPH: Consequently, when I learned from—ah—someone in the Air Ministry that this new post was going at Baffin, I pulled a few other strings and there you are. . . .
MILES: For two years.
SIR RALPH (*pocketing the tin of tobacco, as Miles stares*): You won't be entirely without distractions. That girl of Cartwright's is over there with him, isn't she?
MILES: Podgy?
SIR RALPH: Isabel. Capable girl. Lot of good qualities.
MILES: Lot of everything.
SIR RALPH: Let me see. . . . How old are you at the moment. . .? Thirty-five?
MILES: Thirty-one.
SIR RALPH: You used to see a great deal of Isabel at one time.
MILES: No one can help seeing a great deal of her at one time.
SIR RALPH: How old is she now? Thirty-one?

MILES : Thirty-five. Father, if all this amounts to some sort of devious attempt to pull yet another set of strings, the answer is no. Definitely, no.
SIR RALPH : I don't know what you're talking about.
MILES : Good. (*Hurriedly.*) I can't stop—I've got to run across to Pall Mall—to buy some tobacco.

[*He goes out, by lobby door. Sir Ralph looks after him, frustrated, as Langley appears down the stairs, carrying Sir Ralph's suitcase and a small overnight case of Alex's. He deposits them at the foot of the stairs.*]

SIR RALPH : Ah—Langley—everything ready ?
LANGLEY (*coming into doorway*) : Yes, sir. (*Fussily.*) I only packed the military uniform, sir. Not the Boy Scout. I don't know whether. . . .
SIR RALPH : No, no, no—I'm not a music hall turn.

[*The front door bell rings.*]

I shall be ready for the car in about five minutes.
LANGLEY : Yes, sir.

[*Langley turning to go and answer the bell, stands aside for Alex, who has come downstairs and now enters, carrying coat, hat and handbag.*]

ALEX : Where's Miles ?

[*Langley exits.*]

SIR RALPH : He—had to go out for a minute.
ALEX (*shrewdly*) : You didn't start talking about Podgy ?
SIR RALPH (*defensive*) : Well—I merely touched on it.
ALEX (*despairingly*) : Father. One can merely touch on a land-mine with the most inconvenient results. (*Putting down coat.*) You know what Miles is, when it comes to that aspect of life. Advice is the least

advisable thing. Look at the time we had with that sex-mad Wren in Lyme Regis. You merely touched on that and he very nearly married her. It was only D-Day that took his mind off it.

SIR RALPH: Well, we want him to marry Podgy.

ALEX: Yes, but unfortunately Podgy isn't a sex-mad Wren.

SIR RALPH: She isn't a Wren. I don't know about anything else.

[*Langley appears in the doorway.*]

LANGLEY: Major Ashley, sir.

SIR RALPH: Oh. (*Indicating to bring him in.*) All right.

[*Langley goes again to hall. Alex has been making signs at Sir Ralph, exasperatedly.*]

SIR RALPH: What's the matter with you?

ALEX (*in an undertone*): I wanted to be out.

SIR RALPH: Don't be silly—it's you he's come to see.

[*Langley shows in Guy Ashley. He is a solid, serious, quietly spoken man of about thirty-five, in Guards' Officer's full-dress uniform of scarlet and bearskin.*]

Come in, Guy.

GUY: Good morning, sir. Hullo, Alex.

ALEX (*friendly, but a shade reserved.*) Good morning, Guy. (*To Langley, indicating scales.*) You can take these now, Langley.

[*Langley collects scales and goes out to kitchen, Guy staring curiously at the scales. Alex starts to busy herself with re-packing Miles's clothes.*]

GUY: I just looked in really to wish Miles good luck.

SIR RALPH: Nice of you. Forgive me, Guy, won't you—I've got to be off in a few minutes.

[*He starts for doors to hall. Alex looks up vexedly.*]

ALEX: Father. . . .
SIR RALPH: Yes, Alex?
ALEX: Don't be long, will you—you've got to be off in a few minutes.
SIR RALPH: I thought I just said that.

[*He goes upstairs.*]

ALEX: Miles is out, I'm afraid.
GUY (*smiling*): I wanted to see you, anyway. I'm on King's Guard to-day, so I had the chance.
ALEX (*nodding*): I heard you and the orchestra come past a little while ago.
GUY: You didn't go down to the Graftons' last week-end, after all.
ALEX: No, I had to put it off. I had an awful lot of things to do, for Miles.
GUY: It wasn't because you heard I was going?
ALEX: Why on earth should it be?
GUY: Alex—surely we're fond enough of each other to be honest. The last time we had a serious talk you promised to make a definite decision one way or the other. Ever since then you've been avoiding me like the plague.
ALEX: Oh, no, not like that, Guy.
GUY: Yes, you have. Does that mean the answer is no?
ALEX: No. (*Hastily.*) It doesn't, I mean.
GUY: Then, darling, do you. . . ?
ALEX: Guy, I—I'm afraid I still can't tell you.
GUY: I don't know what's happened to you, Alex. When all this started, I felt pretty sure how you felt. . . .

ALEX: I know, Guy—and I felt pretty sure, too—and I know I'm being difficult—but . . . just let's go on as we are for a while. . . .
GUY: We've gone on much too long already. Dammit, Alex, I was a Captain when I first asked you. I don't want to be a Field Marshal before I find out.
ALEX: Guy, I know it's hard to understand. . . .
GUY: That's putting it mildly. In my opinion, it's. . . .

[*He breaks off, as he sees Langley in the doorway.*]

ALEX: Yes, Langley, what is it?
LANGLEY: I'm just locking up, Miss Alex—but if it wouldn't be convenient. . . .
ALEX: It's quite convenient.

[*Langley enters and crosses to right-hand window which he proceeds to fasten. Guy, exasperated, has turned to face the back window.*]

(*conversationally, to Guy*) Was it amusing at the Graftons?
GUY (*gloomily*): Sheep dog trials. (*Alex smiles.*) And I don't know one sheep from another. (*As Langley comes towards back window, Guy fastens it with one hand.*) It's all right; I've done it.
LANGLEY (*a little disconcerted*): Thank you very much, sir.

[*He goes, closing double doors.*]

GUY (*instantly*): We can't go on indefinitely in this state of suspended animation. I've been asking you to marry me for five years. And all that time, you haven't said "No", but you haven't said "Yes" either. All you've said is "Perhaps".
ALEX: Guy—I quite know how you feel. . . .

GUY (*appealingly*): Alex, darling, won't you please make up your mind to . . . make up your mind? Why not do it now? I could tell the Commanding Officer to-morrow morning, as soon as I go off guard.

ALEX: Commanding Officer?

GUY: Well, naturally, I'd have to get his consent. (*As Alex bristles.*) You know it's just a regimental tradition . . .

ALEX: Which can do with a nice clean fracture.

GUY: Alex, darling. . . .

[*He breaks off infuriatedly as Miles enters at lobby door, with a tin of tobacco.*]

MILES (*surprised to see Guy*): Oh, hullo, Guy.

GUY (*annoyed*): Hullo, Miles.

ALEX (*relieved*): Hullo, Miles. Guy just came in to wish you luck.

MILES (*with amused look at Guy*): I know. I met him on the corner.

ALEX: Oh, you did?

[*She gives Guy a look. Guy glares at Miles. Langley comes out from kitchen, now wearing a dark blue mackintosh over his black suit, and carrying a chauffeur's cap. He picks up Sir Ralph's suitcase and taps at open door.*]

LANGLEY (*as they look round*): Pardon me, Miss Alex —I've attended to everywhere else, but if you wouldn't mind just seeing to the lobby door, after I. . . .

ALEX: I will, Langley.

LANGLEY: Thank you very much, Miss. (*To Miles.*) I hope you find Baffin Bay all you expect it to be, sir.

MILES: Thank you, Langley. I'm afraid I will.

[*Langley looks a little taken aback, crosses to the lobby. During this, Alex has turned to Guy.*]

ALEX: Guy, I've got to get both Miles and Father off within the next ten minutes and if there's any further diversion, I'll never do it. You do understand, don't you?

GUY (*dryly*): I do.

[*Langley picks up Sir Ralph's brief case and goes out by lobby door.*]

ALEX (*to Guy*): Now, I must turn you out. Honestly.

[*She looks at him suddenly, smiles appealingly. Guy is melted in spite of himself.*]

GUY: Of course. (*Starts towards hall.*)

ALEX (*indicating lobby*): You can go that way, it'll be quicker.

GUY (*woefully*): Thanks. (*Starts towards lobby, then pauses.*) And that other . . . business—I do wish you . . . will you, Alex?

ALEX (*with a smile*): Perhaps. (*Guy reacts.*) Well, maybe. . . . I'll try.

GUY: Do—please. (*To Miles, shaking hands.*) Goodbye, Miles.

MILES: Good luck.

GUY: What? Oh.

[*He smiles rather frigidly and goes out by lobby door.*]

MILES: Poor Guy. He's never wholly approved of me since our last day at school. He said he was going into the Brigade and I said "Fire, Church Lads, or Ambulance?" As for you, I think you're treating him disgracefully. You know perfectly well you're going to marry him and all you do is keep him pending. I suppose it comes from working in Whitehall.

ALEX : I'm not certain yet that I am going to marry him.

MILES : Not certain ? But that's the one thing everybody's been certain of for years. Don't tell me you're still wondering if it's calf love. . . .

ALEX : I know how I feel about Guy. I also know that when you marry into the Brigade of Guards you need to be completely assured that as a wife you do have priority. Miles, you spent the war in the Brigade yourself. You know what I mean. It isn't just five regiments. It's a religion. I want to be quite sure, before I marry him, that Guy loves me more than his Commanding Officer.

MILES : Why don't you ask his Commanding Officer?

ALEX (*giving him a look, as she crosses to telephone*) : Your car should be here. I'd better check up on it. Add up, will you ?

[*She starts to dial number. Miles is putting ashtray and Gray's* Anatomy *into case.*]

MILES : If it'll give you any pleasure.

[*He starts to add. Sir Ralph comes downstairs and into the room. He has now changed into a lounge suit and is carrying bowler hat and gloves.*]

SIR RALPH (*briskly*) : Alex, see if Langley's there, will you ?

ALEX (*looking out of window, as she holds on*) : Yes, he is—just.

SIR RALPH : Good. (*Very rapidly.*) Well, Miles, have a good trip, have a good time, do a good job. Good-bye.

[*He goes rapidly towards hall.*]

MILES : I'll come and see you off.

SIR RALPH (*in instant alarm*): No, no, no. Stay where you are.

[*He goes out hastily to hall. Reappears immediately.*]

(*To Miles.*) Remember me to Cartwright.

[*He vanishes again—this time for good.*]

MILES: I'm not surprised he finds funerals a little slow.

[*Front door slams. Alex, still waiting for an answer, is looking out of the window.*]

ALEX: I meant to ask Guy about that sentry.
MILES (*who is adding*): What sentry?
ALEX: The one that's out there now. I've seen him several times. I'm sure he's insane.
MILES: You can't be in the Army if you're insane. At least, not below the rank of Major. What does he do—(*makes lunatic movement with forefinger and thumbs*) in front of his box or something?
ALEX: He stares with a sort of nightmare expression.
MILES: Probably only thinking of his Sergeant.
ALEX (*into telephone*): Hullo? I'm speaking from Archery House, St. James's Palace. I ordered a car . . . oh, good. Thank you very much. (*She rings off—glances out at window*). There they go. Langley always drives the car as if he were holding a tray.
MILES (*who is adding again*): I wouldn't mind that, if he didn't also serve the dinner as if he were driving the car.
ALEX (*crossing from window*): He's better than nothing at all, which is probably what we'll end up with. I think he's got his eye on the Athenaeum.
MILES: Well, it's their turn. The last one went to Lyons Corner House. (*Finishing addition.*) Seventy-three pounds. Blast, that's seven pounds overweight,

not counting the cases. (*Opening case.*) Now what shall we take out?

ALEX: These, to start with. (*Takes out silk dressing-gown and pyjamas.*)

MILES: Over my dead body. (*Puts them in again.*) What about the second pair of . . . no, I may need those. . . . Of course! I've got it! (*Rummaging.*) Podgy goes without. (*Pulling out Gray's* Anatomy *and slinging it on to settee.*) She'd only strain her eyes, anyway. It's pitch dark up there for six months of the year. . . . Alex, did you know it was Father who perpetrated this Arctic act of treachery?

ALEX (*who is tidying the case again*): I knew he had a finger in it.

MILES: A finger! He had both hands, up to his neck! Apparently he found out about this Baffin Bay thing from some loose-tongued ass in the Air Min . . . (*with dawning suspicion*) It wasn't from you, by any chance?

ALEX (*closing case*): Yes, as a matter of fact, it was.

MILES (*reproachfully*): Alexandra! And I used to think you were quite fond of me in a despairing sort of way.

[*Front-door bell rings.*]

ALEX: There's the car.

MILES: Your only brother—into cold storage. Two thousand miles north of anywhere. And I could have been in Washington. In the very heart of our great Empire . . . well, anyway, the centre of civilisation.

ALEX: Which, as far as you're concerned, means something in nylons—with a touch of "Mischief" behind the ears. Believe me, Miles, if you want to make any kind of a career, your only chance is to get as far away from civilisation as possible.

MILES: What kind of a career am I supposed to make in Baffin Bay? The world's skating championship?

ALEX: You've got the opportunity of a lifetime. Strategically speaking, Baffin Bay is going to be the Clapham Junction of the air.

MILES: And I've got the opportunity of living at Clapham Junction.

ALEX: It's also on the shortest direct air route between New York and Moscow.

MILES: That's another charming thought. And to think that only last week Toby Smollett offered me a share in a cocoa plantation in the West Indies. Sunshine. American millionaires and their beautifully decorated daughters. And no need even to drink the damn cocoa. If I had any sense at all. . . .

ALEX: Miles. The car's here. . . .

MILES: I'm not surprised Father was too ashamed to see me off.

ALEX: I'm seeing you off, darling.

MILES: You have no shame. You just want to make sure that I go. Of all the ruthless, heartless. . . .

ALEX: Miles. . . .

MILES: I know—the car's there. . . .

[*As he is speaking, the Palace clock strikes the quarter.*]

ALEX (*in sudden alarm, silencing him*): I believe that was a quarter past! (*Looks at clock on mantelpiece.*) It's after that!

MILES (*looks at wrist-watch*): *I* make it half past.

ALEX (*aghast*): Half past!

MILES (*delightedly*): Yes—so that's fine—I've missed the plane.

ALEX: Nonsense . . . wait a minute—perhaps we can see by this. . . .

[*She goes quickly to radio and switches it on.*]

MILES: For that matter we could dial TIM, but you're only wasting time. We'll never make it.
ALEX: We've got to make it. You get your coat. Hurry.

[*Miles goes out to hall, as Alex gets quickly into coat. The radio programme is now fading up—a tenor singing Tosti's "Good-bye." Miles comes hurrying in again with soft hat on and getting into overcoat.*]
MILES (*as he comes in*): And I may say, the minute I get there. . . .
SINGER (*on radio*): Good-bye for ever. . . .
MILES (*glaring at radio*): All right . . . all right. (*To Alex.*) . . . I'm going to apply for a transfer. I shall have no scruples whatever. . . .

[*Alex has hastily pulled on her hat.*]

ALEX: Come on.
MILES: Don't you even want to see what you look like?
ALEX (*violently*): No! (*Starts for door, pauses.*) Have you got the ticket?
MILES (*about to pick up cases*): Yes, of course I have . . . No, I haven't. Now where the blazes . . . (*Crosses towards mantelpiece, looking for ticket envelope.*)

[*Alex spots envelope on telephone table.*]

ALEX: Over there.

[*She hastily gets it and gives it him as he crosses back. She starts for door again. Miles picks up cases and is about to follow—pauses again.*]

MILES: Wait a minute—you've forgotten the lobby door.

ALEX : Miles—for the love of Heaven. . . .
MILES : Well, you haven't locked it. . . .
ALEX : There's no time now—there's a sentry outside. . . .
MILES : Insane, according to you.
ALEX : Miles ! Come on !

[*She yanks him into the hall, snatches up her over-night case and they vanish towards front door.*]

SINGER (*on radio, reaching climax*) : Good-bye ! Good-bye ! (*The front door slams. There is a moment of silence.*)

B.B.C. ANNOUNCER (*in honeyed tone*) : That, of course, was Tosti's famous " Good-bye."
[*The " day " lighting fades. The view through the back window is lit now only by moonlight and the street lamp outside, which has come alight. One or two lights can be seen in the palace windows across the court. The Lobby Room is in darkness, except for the moonlight coming in at the right-hand window, the light from the lamp outside the other, and the yellow glow of the radio dial. The Palace clock outside starts to strike ten. As it does so, the uniformed figure of a young Guardsman, Arthur Crisp, appears from the right, outside the back window. He peers in, then tries to open the window, fails, and moves on towards the left, appearing again beyond the glass panes of the Lobby Door. He tries the door, it opens and he looks cautiously in, the light from the lamp outside illuminating the lobby. We see that he is about twenty years old and his manner is agitated. He is carrying a rifle with fixed bayonet. He looks into the room, then leans the rifle against the wall of the lobby, just inside the door, and withdraws again. As Arthur moves past back window and disappears to the right, the six pips go on the radio. Arthur comes past back window from right, moving slowly and carrying over his shoulder a burden we cannot yet identify.*]

B.B.C. NEWS READER: This is the B.B.C. Light Programme. Here is the ten o'clock news.

[*Arthur comes in at the lobby door. He is carrying over his shoulder, feet foremost, the small limp body of Christina Deed. She is Irish, about nineteen, and is wearing a camel coat over a pale green linen dress, with a scarf tied over her hair. Her legs are bare except for short ankle socks. Her handbag is dangling from a strap over her shoulder. She is unconscious, but their entrance savours more of the comic than the dramatic.*]

Their Majesties the King and Queen. . . .

[*Arthur springs to attention and nearly drops Christina.*]

. . . returned to London this morning from Balmoral.

[*Arthur relieved, comes on into the room and dumps Christina into wing chair above fireplace.*]

England has made a disastrous start in the Third Test Match.

ARTHUR (*bending over Christina, agitatedly*): Chris. Christina. (*Shaking her gently.*) Oh, Chris, for Cripes sake. . . .

NEWS READER (*continuing*): Reports from foreign capitals indicate that the international situation still remains. . . .

[*Arthur agitatedly turns to radio and twists knob to switch it off. It has the effect, however, of violently increasing the volume.*]

. . . compARATIVELY QUIET, THOUGH. . . .

[*Arthur starts, and twists other knobs desperately. There is a cacophony of howls and squeaks from the radio and then silence, as Arthur finally succeeds in switching off. He turns rapidly back to Christina.*]

ARTHUR (*desperately*): Chris . . . you can't stay in here. . . .

[*She is completely out. He looks around despairingly, sees the telephone and crosses quickly to it, taking her bag with him, he drops bag and dials a number rapidly, peering anxiously out of the window as he waits for an answer.*]

(*into telephone*): Hullo. Is that the Crumpled Horn Milk Bar? Could I speak to Doreen please? (*He waits a moment, anxiously.*) Dorrie? It's Arthur. Is Les coming in for you to-night? Just this moment what? (*In vast relief.*) Oh, then can I speak to him please? I know, Dorrie, but it's urgent. Thanks, Dorrie. (*He holds on and looks towards Christina. Calls to her in an undertone.*) Chris.

[*She is motionless.*]

(*into telephone*): That you, Les? I'm in a ruddy awful mess . . . It's Arthur. I *am* on guard, but something's happened. It's Chris. *Christina.* You know, my . . . No, she's in London. She's here. She's fainted. No, shut up, Les, I'm not joking. The relief'll be round in a minute—if I don't get her out, there'll be . . . Oh, God, you've had a few, haven't you? I wasn't referring to milk. I rang you to ask for some help, but never mind. What d'you say? No, it's all right, Les, thank you. No, no—don't come round—not in the state you're in. Yes, yes, I can manage, don't you bother. You get Dorrie to give you a milk shake. I said, get Doreen . . . (*Hearing something.*) Oh, Cripes, here's the relief . . . (*He slams down the receiver and dashes across to Christina.*) Chris . . . I'll try and nip back from the Guard Room. Stay where you are, don't move!

[*She is still unconscious. Arthur dashes to the lobby door*

*and out—reappears, grabs his rifle and exits rapidly, closing the door. We see him race past the back window towards the right. Words of command are heard outside and the stamping of boots on the pavement.*]

CHRISTINA (*faintly and without moving*): Arthur. . . .

[*She gives a little half-sigh, half-moan and relapses into silence again. A taxi door slams outside. We hear the sound of the front door and a light comes on in the hall. Miles appears from direction of the front door. He looks jaded and is taking off his overcoat as he comes. He slings it on to something out of sight in the hall, and comes in, carrying evening paper. Switches on light switch at door which lights up some wall brackets and a lamp near the drinks cabinet. The fireplace end of the room, where Christina is still sprawled in the wing chair, is left in semi-shadow. Miles, unaware of her, sighs wearily and makes a bee-line for the drinks cabinet. He mixes himself a strongish whisky and soda and takes it with him to the telephone table. He dials a number. Pulls curtain as he waits, and takes a drink.*]

MILES (*into telephone*): Hullo? May I speak to—Oh, it *is* you, Alex . . . (*With asperity.*) Me. Don't sound so awestruck, I'm still on this earth. I never left it. I don't know. The wings were loose or something. You can be very grateful I wouldn't let you wait. Nine hours and, now, not till to-morrow . . . I'm at home, having a strong whisky. I know all about the rest of the month—I don't think Father can grudge me a couple of fingers. (*With distaste.*) I have to ring and check at six am.. (*Wearily.*) Yes, yes, I shall. No, of course not, stay at Anne's. I'll give you a ring in the morning. My dear Alex, what *could* happen? Good night, and may your conscience give you some sleep. If you have one.

[*He rings off, takes drink to the settee, puts glass on stool, and sits. Rises hastily, having sat on Gray's "Anatomy". He looks at this with some asperity and puts it on centre table. Gets cigarette out and starts for mantelpiece for matches . . . then pauses, as he finds a box in his pocket. Sits and lights cigarette, then lies on settee with his feet up. He opens the paper and looks at it yawning.*]

CHRISTINA (*faintly*): Arthur. . . .

[*Miles stiffens in some surprise, slowly lowers the paper and glances towards hall door. Decides he is hearing things and takes a drink. Raises the paper again.*]

CHRISTINA (*a little louder, rather plaintively*): Arthur. . . .

[*Miles snaps down the paper and sits upright looking round the room. Christina also raises herself, and looks dazedly around. Their eyes meet. They stare at each other.*]

(*not really seeing him clearly*): Arthur, where am I?
MILES (*jumping up*): Never mind that. (*Crossing to her.*) Who are you and what the devil are you doing in here? (*Switches on lights by lobby door.*)
CHRISTINA (*vaguely*): Where's Arthur?
MILES: Who's Arthur?
CHRISTINA (*coming to, a little*): What am I doing in here? (*She struggles to rise.*)
MILES (*sharply*): Stay where you are—and don't try to be funny. Is Arthur in here somewhere too?
CHRISTINA (*dazedly*): He can't be.
MILES: He'd better not be. (*As she makes to move.*) Sit still. Now before I dial 999, I want to know exactly what you've stolen?
CHRISTINA (*still a little dazed*): I've not stolen anything . . . I think I must have fainted. (*Looking round vaguely.*) Where am I?

MILES: Now, you can stop that. You know perfectly well you're in St. James's Palace.
CHRISTINA (*aghast*): Oh, Blessed Mother of God!

[*She springs up. He springs towards her. Her ankle gives way and she falls into his arms.*]

(*in acute pain*) Oh, my ankle?
MILES (*angrily, holding her*): I told you not to try anything. (*He is about to let go of her, but she holds on to him.*)
CHRISTINA: Don't let me go!

[*He looks at her a little puzzled.*]

It feels as if I've twisted it.

[*She makes to put her foot down, but can't bear the weight. He sees the pain is genuine.*]

MILES: Over on here. . . .

[*He helps her, hopping, to the settee and lets her down on to it. She winces with pain again.*]

CHRISTINA: I suppose that'll be why I fainted. . . .
MILES (*picking up his whisky*): Take a sip of this.

[*She drinks, makes a wry face.*]

CHRISTINA: Ugh. It's Scotch, isn't it?
MILES (*amused*): Never had it before?
CHRISTINA: No. I was brought up on Irish.

[*Miles reacts. Christina drinks another mouthful, makes another face, and gives him back the glass.*]

Thank you very much. I'll be all right now.

[*She makes to move, but he restrains her.*]

MILES: You've started this sort of thing a little young haven't you?

CHRISTINA: It was an accident. I beg your pardon.

MILES (*looking round room*): I can't think how you got in here. . . . (*Pulls curtains of back window.*)

CHRISTINA: Neither can I.

MILES (*disregarding her, as he looks towards lobby*): Of course—the lobby door. . . .

CHRISTINA: I couldn't tell you. I was gone away altogether. Unconscious.

MILES: You must have been in before you—went away altogether.

CHRISTINA: No. I was out in the street. Someone must have. . . .

[*She breaks off abruptly, as she suddenly realises who.*]

MILES: Must have what?

CHRISTINA (*carefully*): Must have brought me in here. I'd better try to go now, if you don't mind . . . (*Makes move of hand to shoulder. In dismay.*) Oh, where's my bag? (*She looks around.*)

MILES (*more in sorrow than in anger*): That's a very old one. On a job like this, I'm quite sure you didn't bring a bag. . . .

CHRISTINA (*still looking round, concerned*): It's a brown leather one, with a shoulder strap. . . .

MILES: Don't bother—I can imagine it just as well for myself.

CHRISTINA (*distressed*): I must find it. There's all my money in it. . . .

MILES: And how much of ours?

CHRISTINA (*heatedly*): I'm not that kind of a girl at all.

MILES: All right. If you're going to be uncooperative, you'd better do it through the proper channels. (*As he goes to telephone.*) It's very foolish

of you, because . . . (*He stops as he sees something on floor. A shade uncomfortable.*) You did say a brown leather one, with a. . . ?

[*He picks the bag up from the floor, by the strap.*]

CHRISTINA (*delighted*): Oh, thank Heaven for that now! (*As he makes to return it.*) You can look inside. Everything's mine.

MILES (*after a momentary pause*): I can imagine that, too, thank you.

[*He gives her the bag. As he does so he sees her ankle—looks at it in concern.*]

MILES: Your ankle looks swollen, doesn't it?

CHRISTINA (*a shade of indignation*): Well, that's not its normal size. (*She tries to flex her foot. The pain makes her wince and close her eyes.*)

MILES (*looking at her anxiously*): You aren't going away again, are you?

CHRISTINA (*opening her eyes again*): No, I'm not. Thank you. (*She rubs her ankle.*)

MILES: You'd better loosen that scarf, just in case. . . .

[*She starts to do so, submissively. He looks at her ankle.*]

I should think the best thing would be a cold compress. . . .

[*She takes scarf off and shakes her hair loose. She is very pretty indeed. He doesn't fail to notice it.*]

. . . or something. (*Pulling himself together.*) Yes. Cold compress. Take your sock off, will you?

CHRISTINA (*shaking her head*): Thank you very much —it's quite all right.

MILES: Now, don't be silly. Take it off.

CHRISTINA: No—I couldn't. . . .

MILES: Shall I do it? (*Bends to do it.*)
CHRISTINA (*moving sharply away along settee*): No, you'll not!
MILES: It's only a sock.
CHRISTINA: Yes, but . . . not in here.
MILES: You mean you want to do it in the bathroom?
CHRISTINA: It's not that. (*Looks round unhappily.*) It's. . . .
MILES: If you mean it's St. James's Palace, we take our socks off here, just as often as anywhere else. (*She starts to take off her shoe. He looks down at her appreciatively. She looks up and catches him. Business-like*) Cold compress. Now what can we . . . Have you a handkerchief? No, of course, it wouldn't be big enough, if you had. . . .

[*She produces a large white one.*]

MILES (*surprised*): Oh, it would.
CHRISTINA (*a little embarrassed*): I always use a man's.
MILES (*taking it from her*): So do I.

[*She continues to take off her shoe and sock. He starts to fold handkerchief.*]

You know, people who come here very often behave in a quite extraordinarily apprehensive manner. I think they expect the entire Court of St. James's to come down the stairs at any moment . . . Most unlikely. I'll just get some water on this . . . (*He starts towards hall—then thinks better of leaving her alone in the room.*) On second thoughts—soda water will do. (*He goes to drinks cabinet and squirts soda on to the folded handkerchief.*) Might even be better. Bubbles. (*Crossing to her.*) Now then, put up your leg, will you. . . .

[*She puts it up on settee. He puts on the compress. She gives a little start.*]

MILES: Cold?

CHRISTINA: It was.

MILES (*starting to fasten handkerchief*): How did you do it?

CHRISTINA (*guardedly*): I . . . don't remember exactly.

MILES: You were in the street, you said?

CHRISTINA: I was—yes. I was walking along.

MILES: D'you think you tripped on something?

CHRISTINA: I suppose I did—yes.

MILES: And then you twisted your ankle?

CHRISTINA: I suppose I did. Twisted my ankle.

MILES (*looking at her a little curiously*): You didn't hit your head on anything, did you?

CHRISTINA: Not that I know of.

MILES: Not that you know of anything, very much, do you?

[*She smiles noncommitally.*]

There. You'd better keep it up for a bit. (*Rising.*) Now, is there anyone I can ring—tell them you're here? I don't know your name, do I?

CHRISTINA (*putting on shoe and sock again.*): Deed.

MILES: I beg your pardon?

CHRISTINA: D double E D.

MILES: Miss Deed?

CHRISTINA: Yes.

MILES: I suppose everyone says something funny about that.

CHRISTINA: If they've no more sense.

MILES: Mm. My name's Cornwall. I don't have any trouble with that. Except in Truro. Well, now, who do I telephone?

CHRISTINA: No, thanks.

MILES: No one expecting you at home?
CHRISTINA: I wasn't going home.
MILES: Well, somewhere else then? (*Remembering.*) What about Arthur—Arthur Someone. . .?
CHRISTINA: Oh, no, you couldn't ring him.
MILES: When you were coming round, you seemed to think he ought to be with you. Or you ought to be with him.
CHRISTINA: Maybe I was delirious.
MILES (*far from satisfied*): Maybe. Would you like a cigarette?
CHRISTINA: No, thanks.
MILES: The Office of Works does allow smoking in here. (*He offers case.*)
CHRISTINA (*taking one*): Thanks. Very much.

[*He takes one, too—gives her a light.*]

MILES: Funny—someone bringing you in here and just leaving you.
CHRISTINA (*who dislikes the subject*): Yes—it is.
MILES: There aren't many people about here at this time of night. Except the sentries of course.
CHRISTINA (*quickly*): Oh, there were. Passers-by. Several.
MILES: Mm. In any case, the man at the post outside here should have done something about it. He must have been there. I wonder if they know anything about it in the Guard Room . . . (*Starts towards telephone.*)
CHRISTINA (*anxiously*): Will you please not bother?
MILES: No bother. (*Picks up receiver and prepares to dial.*)
CHRISTINA (*in desperation*): It wasn't quite true, what I said.
MILES (*with some satisfaction*): Oh, it wasn't? (*Replaces receiver.*)

CHRISTINA : I did come in of my own accord.
MILES : Oh, you did ?
CHRISTINA : I came in—after my dog.
MILES : And what did *he* come in after ?
CHRISTINA : He ran away. He was after a cat or something . . . the . . . door was open and he ran inside . . . I ran in after him . . . and then I tripped over something and . . . twisted my ankle.
MILES : And then you fainted ?
CHRISTINA : I did.
MILES : Very conveniently—into the armchair ?
CHRISTINA : I did.
MILES (*after a moment's pause*) : And I suppose the dog's name is Arthur ?
CHRISTINA (*delightedly*) : Yes—that's right.
MILES (*dryly*) : No wonder I couldn't telephone him. And after you fainted, Arthur rather meanly left you in the lurch and trotted out again—carefully closing the lobby door behind him ?
CHRISTINA : No, he couldn't have done that.
MILES : Not even a dog like Arthur? In that case, he must be in the house somewhere. I'd better see if I can find him . (*Moving towards hall.*) Arthur! Arthur ! (*He whistles. Then breaks off.*) Or shall I not bother ?

[*Christina doesn't answer.*]

MILES : None of that's quite true, either, is it ?
CHRISTINA (*in a very small voice*) : No, it's not.
MILES (*returning to her*) : Well, I don't want to seem inquisitive, but I think—in the circumstances—I m entitled to the truth, aren't I ?

[*She is silent. She fidgets with the compress.*]

I may have said there's nothing to be alarmed at in St. James's Palace, but we don't actually encourage complete strangers to come in here and faint all over

the ground floor. As a matter of fact, this is a private house. . . .

[*She bursts into tears.*]

Oh, Lord . . . (*firmly.*) Miss—Thing or whatever it is—Deed . . . Stop it. Where's your handkerchief?

[*She goes on crying, mumbling something indistinguishable.*]

(*firmly.*) Come on, now, pull yourself together. Where's your handkerchief?

CHRISTINA (*in tears*): It's on my ankle.

MILES: Damn, so it is. (*Picking up scarf.*) Here—use this.

[*She takes it, but goes on crying without using it.*]

What's the matter—it won't shrink, will it?

[*She shakes her head, dries her eyes on the scarf. Miles goes to telephone and starts to dial. Christina hears it and turns her head apprehensively.*]

(*seeing her look*) I'm not ringing the police. I very probably should be, but I'm not. (*Finishes dialling and stands waiting for answer.*) I don't know if you did come in here to take anything, but apparently you haven't. I shall therefore put you in a taxi, give you a quid and you can go—as long as you go a long way from here. Is that understood?

CHRISTINA (*small voice*): Yes. Thank you very much.

MILES: And don't go breaking into people's houses again. You're not competent to do it. Damn. There doesn't seem to be one on the rank. (*Replaces receiver.*) I'll have to try and get one out in the street. (*He moves towards hall—pauses.*) Now stay where you are and don't go twisting the other ankle.

(*He goes out into hall and disappears in direction of front*

*door. Christina looks towards lobby door and tries to get to her feet. She is still unable to bear any weight on the ankle, subsides resignedly on to settee again. The lobby door opens slowly and Arthur peers cautiously in. He slips inside. He has no rifle this time. He comes quickly into the room making for the chair in which he left Christina. Sees she isn't in it—then sees her on the settee.*]

ARTHUR (*in urgent undertone*): Chris. . . .

[*She turns sharply.*]

(*coming towards her.*) Chris, are you . . . ?
CHRISTINA (*urgently*): No, no—get out. . . .
ARTHUR (*disregarding this*): Why d'you go and put the lights on? If anyone came, they'd. . . .
CHRISTINA (*exasperated*): Arthur! There's someone here. . . !
ARTHUR (*taken aback*): What!
CHRISTINA (*with desperate urgency*): He'll be back in a minute. Get outside! Quickly!
ARTHUR (*dithering*): Yes, but what about you—what's happened. . . ?
CHRISTINA (*impatiently*): It's all right—I fixed it, but there'll be murder let loose if you don't. . . .

[*Her words die away as Miles enters from hall.*]

MILES (*as he comes in*): I've got one—so now if you. . . .

[*He breaks off and stares. Arthur aghast, comes to attention. Christina and Arthur speak almost simultaneously.*]

CHRISTINA: It's my fault entirely. . . .
ARTHUR: I'm very sorry, sir. . . .
MILES (*silencing them*): Just a minute.

[*He comes down towards Arthur—looks from one to the other.*]

Arthur—I presume?

ARTHUR: Sir. (*Recovering himself.*) No. 4105130 Guardsman Crisp, sir.

CHRISTINA (*to Miles*): If you'll just let me tell you what . . .

MILES (*firmly*): No. Thank you, but no. I've already had two versions from you and I see no reason why the third should be any . . .

CHRISTINA: It'll have to be the truth this time. . . .

MILES (*disregarding her*): . . . should be any more reliable than its predecessors. (*To Arthur.*) Now—let's have it from you—and stick to the facts.

ARTHUR (*uncomfortable*): Sir.

MILES: Take your cap off.

ARTHUR: Sir.

[*Arthur removes bearskin.*]

MILES: Well, carry on.

[*Arthur swallows, breathing heavily—doesn't know how to begin.*]

MILES (*impatiently*): Well?

ARTHUR (*still strictly to attention*): Well, sir—I am on guard duty during the present twenty-four hours, sir—and I was on sentry duty from twenty to twenty-two hundred hours to-night, sir—that is to say, I was, of course, on previously this morning, from. . . .

MILES: Never mind about the morning, unless it has something to do with it. Has it?

ARTHUR: No, sir.

MILES: Well, keep to the point, then.

ARTHUR: Sir. Well, sir. . . .

MILES : And you needn't keep to attention. . . .
ARTHUR : Sir. (*Stands easy.*)
MILES : . . . If this is going to be a long job, we don't want you fainting in here as well. Carry on.
ARTHUR : Sir. I was on sentry duty, sir—about nine-thirty p.m. it would be—and Christina—this young lady was speaking to me, sir . . .
CHRISTINA : I shouldn't have done it, I know that, but if you'll only let me . . .
MILES : Quiet. (*Looks at Arthur.*) She was speaking to you when you were at your post ?
ARTHUR : Yes, sir—outside my box, sir.
MILES : What about ?
ARTHUR : About a private matter, sir.
MILES (*to Christina*) : You had no right to do that. (*As she makes to answer.*) Quiet. (*To Arthur.*) Didn't you tell her to go away ?
ARTHUR : Yes, sir, I did, sir. I told her it was against the regulations, but she said the regulations could . . . that is, she insisted on remaining, sir.
MILES : And what did you do ?
ARTHUR : I refused to speak to her, sir, but she went on speaking to me. Then I patrolled my beat, sir. But she come with me, sir.
MILES : What—up and down ?
ARTHUR : Sir.
CHRISTINA : Well, I had to do it—how else in the name of goodness, could I . . .
MILES (*severely*) : Please. Will you let him go on ? (*To Arthur.*) Then what happened ?
ARTHUR : Well, sir—the last time I turned about, she turned about too, sir—and she must have turned her ankle.
CHRISTINA : Yes, and will you look at it now !
MILES : No, not now. . . .
ARTHUR : And the next thing I knew, sir, she'd

passed out. Fainted, that is. Right on the pavement. (*Outraged.*) Right outside the Palace, sir.

MILES: So you did what?

ARTHUR: I tried to bring her round, sir. Then when I couldn't, I looked for somewhere to get her out of the way . . . The door into here was open . . . (*Uncomfortably.*) . . . at least it wasn't locked—and I knew there was no one in—and I thought it would only be for a minute or two, and I thought as it was illness, it would be all right, sir.

MILES: So you left her in here and went back to your post?

ARTHUR: The relief was due, sir—I couldn't be off my post. I tried to telephone for help but he wasn't in no condition . . . that is it wasn't convenient, not for anyone I knew, and I owe you twopence, I'm afraid, sir.

MILES: Yes, well, we'll leave that outstanding for the moment. And you didn't tell anyone about all this?

ARTHUR: No, sir. I didn't want to get into trouble, sir.

MILES: It wasn't your fault—it was hers . . .

CHRISTINA: That's just what I said . . .

MILES: For the last time, will you be quiet!

[*She is.*]

All right. (*To Christina.*) You heard what he's had to say, you were dogging his footsteps up and down outside here. Is that the truth?

CHRISTINA: There was something I had to say to him. It was the only chance I had.

MILES: Nonsense. You could have seen him perfectly easily when he was off duty.

CHRISTINA: D'you think he would have seen *me*! Not the way he's behaving!

MILES : I take it that you two are. . . ?

[*Christina and Arthur answer simultaneously.*]

ARTHUR : No, sir.

CHRISTINA : We are.

MILES : Well, don't you know?

CHRISTINA (*vehemently*) : I know well enough and so does he, and then he writes and says it's all off. Eleven months we've been engaged to be married and he breaks it off without a word of warning—on two pages !

MILES : You feel he should have devoted more space to it ?

CHRISTINA : It's nothing to laugh at. What kind of a thing was that to do ?

MILES : A most ill-advised thing, I should have said.

ARTHUR : I had to do it, sir.

MILES (*to Christina*) : Still if he feels like that, isn't it better. . . .

CHRISTINA : It's not that he feels like that at all, it's just that he fancies he feels like it. He's nothing more than infatuated with her.

MILES (*bewildered*) : With who ?

ARTHUR (*agitated*) : Please, sir—if you don't mind. . .

CHRISTINA : It's some twopenny-halfpenny girl he's met. He won't even say who.

MILES (*to Arthur*) : Won't you say who ?

ARTHUR (*solidly*) : No, sir.

MILES : I see. Well, that's entirely between the two of you—no business of mine—provided you stop thrashing it out on our doorstep. (*To Arthur.*) You'd better get back to the Guard Room before they miss you.

ARTHUR : Sir. Thank you, sir.

MILES : And remember—you're paid to keep people out of this Palace—not bring them into it.

ARTHUR: Sir.
MILES: I only thank Heaven you're not in the Horse Guards.

[*Arthur lingers, dubiously.*]

MILES: Well, go on, then.
ARTHUR: What about Christina, sir—Miss Deed. . ?
MILES: I'll see to her. She can. . . .
GUY (*calling from hall off*): Hullo!

[*They all freeze.*]

Is there anyone in?
ARTHUR: Oh, God! It's the Major!
GUY (*a little nearer*): Langley! Alex!
MILES (*in undertone, to Arthur*): Get out! (*Jerks head towards lobby door and starts towards hall.*)
ARTHUR (*looking at Christina*): Yes, but. . . .
CHRISTINA (*urgently*): Arthur!

[*Arthur dashes out by lobby door.*]

MILES: Is that you, Guy?

[*Before he quite reaches doorway, Guy enters from hall. Miles keeps between him and Christina.*]

GUY (*surprised*): Miles! I thought you'd gone.
MILES: So did I. There's air travel for you. Here to-day and still here to-morrow.
GUY (*coming further in*): I saw a light on and the front door open and I had suspicions for a moment of. . . .

[*Miles is unable to prevent him from seeing Christina.*]

(*more in sorrow than in anger*): Oh. I beg your pardon.

[*Christina smiles at him nervously but says nothing.*]

MILES (*a little unwillingly*): Major Ashley—Miss—er—Deed. . . .
GUY (*dead pan*): Good evening.
CHRISTINA (*nervously*): Good night.

[*She smiles again. Guy looks somewhat affronted.*]

MILES: Miss Deed had a slight accident outside here. She sprained her. . . .
GUY: Really? I'm sorry to hear it. Alex isn't in, I take it?
MILES: No—she's at Anne's. (*Referring to Christina.*) Luckily, I was able to bring her in here and . . . .
GUY (*coldly*): Yes, quite. Forgive me for having butted in. (*He turns to go.*)
MILES (*anxiously*): Guy. Don't go. Stay a minute and have a drink. . . .
CHRISTINA (*suddenly, in apparent complete self-confidence.*) You don't need to mind me. I'm only still here because I passed out.

[*She picks up Miles's whisky, takes a gulp and lolls back on settee. Miles glares at her.*]

GUY (*to Miles, tersely*): I won't, thanks. I have to get back to the Guard Room.

[*He starts for hall.*]

MILES (*agitatedly*): Guy—just a minute. . . .
GUY (*a little exasperated*): If you're worrying about your father and Alex, you don't need to. You ought to know that. Goodnight.

[*He gives a look at Miles, a perfunctory nod to Christina, and goes, in direction of front door. Miles stands looking after him. Christina puts down the whisky glass demurely.*]

MILES (*turning, in some indignation*): That's fine. Thank you. Very much.

CHRISTINA (*injured innocence*): But I didn't do anything at all.
MILES: You might have done nothing in a rather different kind of way.
CHRISTINA: If you don't mind my saying so, he seemed to start jumping to conclusions the moment he entered the door.
MILES: So you just helped him along a little.
CHRISTINA: Well, I was afraid you might let something slip—about Arthur.
MILES: Never mind what slipped about me.

[*Taxi horn goes outside.*]

CHRISTINA (*startled*): What was that!
MILES: The taxi, getting impatient. (*Turning with some asperity.*) And I'm entirely with him. The sooner you're out of here the better. (*Feeling in pocket for wallet.*) Where d'you live?
CHRISTINA: In Dublin.
MILES (*exasperated, as he takes out pound note*): Where are you staying at the moment?
CHRISTINA: I'm not staying anywhere.
MILES: Well, what have you done with your things? You must have some belongings—luggage or something.
CHRISTINA: I left all that in my room.
MILES: Then you have got a room somewhere.
CHRISTINA: I've a room in Dublin. At the Royal Leinster Hotel.
MILES (*surprised*): At the Leinster?
CHRISTINA: I'm a housemaid there. Till this morning.
MILES: What happened this morning?
CHRISTINA: I got Arthur's letter. So I got on the boat and came over.

MILES: You chucked up your job and just walked out?

CHRISTINA: No. I ran. Even then I nearly missed it. Soon as I got to Euston, I came straight to Arthur. I found out where he was, at the barracks.

MILES (*looking at her with a new sympathy*): Arthur must be quite something in your life.

CHRISTINA (*simply and sincerely*): I'm gone about him.

[*The taxi horn goes again.*]

(*Picking up her bag.*) If you would just recommend me a good hotel. . . .

MILES: To stay at or work in?

CHRISTINA: Well, it might be either.

MILES: I'm afraid I can't. Any hotel that would take you in at this hour of the night, without any luggage, would probably be somewhat the reverse of good. Have you had any dinner?

CHRISTINA: I had a bun at Holyhead.

MILES: Holyhead! That wasn't dinner, it was breakfast!

CHRISTINA: It was nearly lunch time.

MILES: No wonder you spent the evening passing out. You must be starving.

CHRISTINA: No, I'm not. I have indigestion.

MILES: I'm not at all surprised. That's exactly what anyone deserves to have, who tries to go through an emotional crisis on a bun at Holyhead.

[*The taxi horn goes again, two hoots this time.*]

Blast that man.

CHRISTINA: I'm just going. . . .

[*She rises. Miles starts towards her.*]

MILES: No—wait a minute. . . .

[*She takes a step, her ankle gives way and she falls again into his arms. For a moment they are motionless.*]

CHRISTINA: I beg your pardon. It's still a bit weak.
MILES (*ruefully*): So am I.

[*He puts her gently down on settee.*)

The hotel problem being what it is . . . I'll tell him to call back in the morning.

*He is turning towards the hall as. . . .*

*The Curtain falls*

# ACT TWO

*An hour later. Miles and Christina are seated at a small table down left eating an impromptu supper. Christina has taken off her coat, which she has thrown into one of the armchairs, together with her bag.*

MILES: You know, Christina, they must have been crazy to employ you as a chambermaid in that hotel.
CHRISTINA: I was the second best one there.
MILES: Possibly, but your talents were wasted none the less. Do you know this is the finest meal cooked on one leg I've ever eaten?
CHRISTINA: It's nothing to what it could have been.
MILES: On both legs?
CHRISTINA: In a decent kitchen, like we had at home. Will I give you some more thump?
MILES: Thump?
CHRISTINA: Mashed potato.
MILES: Oh. You certainly will. (*Holds out his plate.*) Thump. What's the matter with our kitchen?
CHRISTINA (*helping him to mashed potato*): It's antiquated.
MILES: For a room that was redecorated by Charles II, I suppose that's fair comment. Still, the gas cooker is Edward VII.
CHRISTINA: It should be in the British Museum. At home we had one with a thermostatic control. As well as a patent lighter.
MILES: And where was this begadgetted paradise?
CHRISTINA: In Tramore. County Waterford.
MILES: Waterford. That glass you're using came from Waterford. Do they still know how to make glasses there?
CHRISTINA: I've no idea. They know how to empty them.
MILES: And have the wherewithal to do it. (*Looks*

*ruefully at remains of whisky in decanter.*) So that's how you came to be brought up on whisky.

CHRISTINA: I was not. It was nothing more than a figure of speech. (*With some vigour.*) And if it comes to that, there'll be as much drunk outside Ireland as in it, from all the shortage you hear about.

MILES: You brought up the subject.

CHRISTINA: My father lived his whole life through and never touched a drop.

MILES (*taking last of whisky from decanter*): Mine won't for the rest of the month.

CHRISTINA: He died very young, my father did, I will admit. My mother died last year. That was a different story altogether.

MILES (*pointing to glass*): You mean. . . ?

CHRISTINA: Like a fish. Will you take another cutlet?

MILES: I will, gladly. Take one yourself. And more thump. (*As she does.*) So you and the thermostatic cooker were left alone in the world?

CHRISTINA: Apart from one sister and six brothers.

MILES: I think your mother had every justification. (*Drinks.*)

CHRISTINA: The brothers were all right, but the sister was too like me for peace and comfort.

MILES: So that's why you went to Dublin?

CHRISTINA: I did not. I went to Kilconnel—to the new holiday camp they have there. It was there I met Arthur. I was a waitress.

MILES: And what was he?

CHRISTINA: He was a camper. On his leave, from the regiment. He says he'll never do such a thing again.

MILES: Not because he met you?

CHRISTINA: The discipline was too strict. We got engaged at the end of his fortnight.

MILES : Then back he went to the creature comforts of Wellington Barracks.

CHRISTINA : And I went to Dublin.

MILES : And when did you two meet again ?

CHRISTINA : To-night.

MILES (*surprised*) : You mean, you've only known him a fortnight ?

CHRISTINA : He's written every week since. Until what he wrote this morning.

MILES : And you threw everything up and came over, just like that ?

CHRISTINA : Would you not have done the same ?

MILES : No, but I admit I'm hardly the right person to ask. I generally find a fortnight just about long enough.

CHRISTINA : You'll never have met the right girl then.

MILES : Dozens of times. Will you have another Coca-Cola ?

CHRISTINA : Thanks, I will too. It tasted like nothing on earth, but I enjoyed it. What can they make it of ?

MILES : I haven't the faintest idea. Cocoa I should imagine, with a dash of cola (*fetching one.*) My sister Alex contracted the habit when she was a Waaf. Some fellow in a Super-fortress used to woo her with it. She didn't much care for him, but we've had to keep a dozen of these in the house ever since.

CHRISTINA : You're not living here by yourself then ?

MILES (*amused*) : Me ? This is one of the Grace and Favour houses.

CHRISTINA : What can that be ?

MILES : My father occupies it by the Grace and Favour of His Majesty. I'm just a rather junior Machiavelli in the Foreign Office.

CHRISTINA: Mm?
MILES: Machiavelli.
CHRISTINA (*still not understanding*): Oh. (*Changing the subject.*) You just live here as though you were in your own home?
MILES: We do. Singing in the bath and everything.
CHRISTINA: From what Arthur said, I though only important people lived in here.
MILES: Now I suppose you think he's been wasting his time?
CHRISTINA: It must be nice and central.
MILES: A very good neighbourhood, too. Unfortunately, I shan't be enjoying the amenities after to-night.
CHRISTINA (*dismayed*): You mean they'll turn you out?
MILES: I'm leaving to-morrow. I have a new job, in a nice and central spot in Canada. Five degrees short of the Arctic Circle.
CHRISTINA: It should be chilly.
MILES: To put it mildly. Finished?
CHRISTINA (*nods and rises*): I'll go and wash up.
MILES (*also rising*): Not on a full stomach.
CHRISTINA: All right.

[*He ushers her towards settee. She hops towards it.*]

MILES (*looking at her*): Amazing.
CHRISTINA (*pausing at settee*): What's that now?
MILES: The way you hop. You know, Christina, you not only cook better, you look better, on one leg than most of my acquaintances do on two.
CHRISTINA (*with a dry look at him*): Thanks. (*Sits.*) Even if the compliment might look better on one whisky than it does on three.
MILES: Alcohol is the one thing that never goes to my head.

CHRISTINA: Then Heaven help you. (*Stretching leg out.*) I haven't hopped so far since I went round the Metal Man.

MILES (*sitting on settee beside her*): Which man?

CHRISTINA: The Metal Man—in Tramore. He's a big painted figure up on the cliff there, looking out to sea, and the saying is, if a girl can hop around him three times, she'll be married within the year. There's not a girl in Tramore doesn't ruin her ankles doing it, some time or other. Hopping for a husband, that's what they call it.

MILES: And what's he really doing up there, looking out to sea?

CHRISTINA: He's a warning to sailors.

MILES: I should think they can do with one. So you went hopping round the Metal Man and the next thing you knew, there was Arthur?

CHRISTINA (*nodding*): So there's something to be said for the saying, it seems.

MILES: Well—is there?

CHRISTINA: If it's his letter you're thinking of, pay no attention to that.

MILES: You paid enough attention to come dashing from Dublin.

CHRISTINA: It's just his constitution. He gets funny ideas in the head. This woman's just one of them. He'll be over it in a week or two.

MILES: What makes you so sure?

CHRISTINA: He's had them before.

MILES: What, funny women in the head?

CHRISTINA: He had a notion when he was in Ireland—to get out of the army and into a convent.

MILES: A what!

CHRISTINA (*laughing*): A monastery. It was some of the Brothers he saw—just a funny idea he got in the head—it was gone in an afternoon.

MILES: I take it you gave it a helping push?

CHRISTINA: I just used a bit of psychology. I said I had ideas myself of becoming a nun. (*Lolling back and stretching out.*) He soon saw the absurdity of it.

MILES: Yes, I should imagine he would. And what psychology are you going to use this time?

CHRISTINA (*glancing at him*): I'm not entirely certain yet. But I'll do it easy enough.

MILES: Christina—I don't want to seem rude or defeatist, but I suppose it hasn't occurred to you that you too might be one of Arthur's funny ideas? After all, he did only know you a fortnight. Perhaps this woman is just a tactful invention of his. . . .

CHRISTINA: Not Arthur. He couldn't invent anything. He's no imagination.

MILES: Funny ideas in the head—no imagination . . . What exactly do you see in him?

CHRISTINA (*after a moment's pause*): Things.

MILES: Things. You know, Christina, I think you may be making a serious mistake. (*He moves closer to her.*) Do you know that you're a very attractive person? You have a lot of spirit—a great deal of charm. . . .

CHRISTINA: And a fair amount of washing-up. I think I'd better be doing it. (*She rises.*)

MILES: Now, Christina—please don't come to any wrong conclusions. . . .

CHRISTINA: That's what I've no intention of doing. (*She hops to table. He follows.*) And I can manage single-handed. (*She picks up the two empty plates.*)

MILES: Maybe, but not single-footed as well.

CHRISTINA: All right. (*Picks up empty dish.*) You can bring the rest, then.

[*She hops to the door. He stands watching her, an amused*

*and admiring look on his face. She stops at the door, on one leg, and looks round.*]

And will you kindly take your eyes off my hopping.

MILES: I beg your pardon.

[*He ostentatiously looks away and starts to collect the remains of the things. Christina hops out to kitchen. Miles picks up the empty decanter, looks at it ruefully, then picks up the siphon and takes them both to the drinks cabinet. The front door slams outside. Miles, startled, turns in dismay.*]

Christina!

[*He starts rapidly for the hall.*]

ALEX (*in hall, off*): Miles—are you still up?

[*Miles pulls up—relieved and annoyed at the same time. Alex enters. She is dressed as she was for her last exit in Act I.*]

MILES: Alex, you're crazy—I told you not to bother. . . .

ALEX: I know you did. (*Coming in.*) Having condemned you to the Arctic Circle, I though the least I could do was to comfort your last hours in a sisterly manner. Have you had anything to . . . (*Sees dirty things on table.*) Oh, you have. (*Staring at them a little.*) You've been unusually elaborate. (*She turns away.*)

MILES: Oh—something rather amusing has cropped up. . . .

ALEX (*who is now looking at Christina's coat and bag on chair*): Yes, I see it has. Something from the airport?

MILES: Now, listen, Alex. . . .

ALEX: I don't remember anyone in that coat.

MILES (*exasperated*): There wasn't. And what's more, your outraged sensibilities are working away entirely to no purpose.

ALEX: They've never been wrong in the past.

MILES (*patiently*): The coat merely belongs to a girl friend of one of the sentries.

ALEX: One of the sentries? (*Outraged.*) Really, Miles!

MILES (*exasperated*): Will you, for Heaven's sake, wait till you hear the rest of it? Until this morning she was engaged to him, but now . . .

ALEX: She isn't.

MILES: How did you know that?

ALEX: Woman's intuition. Miles, I really think on your last night in England, you might have exercised a certain amount of . . . (*With sudden alarmed suspicion.*) I suppose that plane didn't go?

MILES: It did not. And will you please get it into your thick, suspicion-riddled head that this girl means nothing to me whatev . . .

[*He pulls up short and a strange look comes into his face.*]

ALEX: What is it?

MILES (*not even hearing her*): Whatever.

ALEX (*looking at him*): Miles, what's the matter with you?

MILES (*suddenly elated*): Nothing—whatever. She's a wonderful cook, too.

ALEX: I'm not in the least . . . (*With sudden concern.*) What have you had for supper?

MILES: Cutlets and thump. Thump, I may say . . .

ALEX (*with growing apprehension*): How many cutlets?

MILES: Two each, I think—or three . . . Thump is what people like you call mashed potato. . . .

ALEX (*suddenly angry*): Miles—do you realise you've

eaten the entire family's rations for the week—and Langley's?

MILES (*laughing*): Well, I'm sorry about Langley's.

[*The swing door opens and Christina comes hopping in from the kitchen.*]

CHRISTINA (*as she comes*): After all that, you never brought. . . .

[*She stops short as she sees Alex. Alex looks curiously at her.*]

MILES: Christina . . . this is my sister. (*To Alex.*) Alex—Miss Deed.

ALEX: Miss—Deed?

MILES: You heard it the first time.

ALEX (*to Christina*): Good evening.

CHRISTINA (*giving Alex nervous little smile*): Good night.

[*She hops to the table, picks up the rest of the things and hops out again and through swing doors to kitchen. Alex stares, speechless.*]

ALEX (*to Miles*): How exactly have you been spending the evening? Apart from eating cutlets?

MILES (*with asperity*): She twisted her ankle.

ALEX: I suppose you were chasing her—and she . . . fell?

MILES: She sprained it before we met. She was having a row with Arthur. That's her boy-friend. Her ex-boy-friend. He brought her in here, through the lobby door, which against my advice you omitted to lock, and here I found her. She had nowhere to go and I could hardly eject her into the night with only one leg to stand on.

ALEX: Even then she would have been one up on your story.

MILES: You don't believe me?
ALEX: Not a word. (*Yawns.*)
MILES: You're going to have to.
ALEX: I'm going to bed. Good night, Miles.

[*She moves towards hall.*]

MILES: Wait a minute—where'd she better sleep?
ALEX: She'd better sleep in one of the otherwise unoccupied bedrooms.

[*She turns to go, as Christina hops in again from the kitchen.*]

Good night—Miss Deed.

[*She goes out and upstairs. Christina is a little taken aback by her tone.*]

CHRISTINA: Was it her Coca-Cola I had?
MILES: It was, but I don't think she holds that against you. Christina, I've got something most important to say. . . .
CHRISTINA: I suppose your sister also went jumping to conclusions?
MILES: She did—and how right she was!
CHRISTINA: She was not!
MILES (*indicating settee*): Sit down there and try not to interrupt me. (*As she does so.*) When Alex came in just now, the front door slammed. And, quite unaccountably, I felt a sort of hollow sinking feeling inside, a sort of clenched fist at the pit of my stomach. I thought at the time it must be that thump of yours. And then, when I was in the act of telling Alex that you meant nothing to me whatever, the most extraordinary thing happened. (*Impressively.*) I suddenly realised I was lying.
CHRISTINA: And would that be extraordinary?
MILES: Christina—please. I suddenly realised that

it hadn't been your thump at all. It was you. I thought you'd gone. (*Sits beside her.*) Christina—I know this sounds quite preposterous—but I believe you're what I've been looking for for years.

CHRISTINA: Once a fortnight.

MILES: No, no, no—this is something totally different. The sort of thing you thought you felt about Arthur.

CHRISTINA (*after a pause*): You think I might be wrong about that?

MILES: Of course you are! That was just wishful thinking. You went hopping round this piece of local whimsy and you said to yourself—subconsciously—"Now I've got to fall in love with someone." All you could find was Arthur. Till now.

CHRISTINA: There's not so much wrong with Arthur.

MILES: Look at his constitution. Holiday camps one minute and nunneries the next. . . .

CHRISTINA: D'you not suppose I could marry him first and change his constitution after?

MILES: Not without bloodshed. A constitution like that is in-born. The only thing you can do is to say good-bye to the owner at the earliest possible moment.

CHRISTINA: Is that what you'd say, honest to God?

MILES (*confidently*): Honest to . . . (*defensively*) Well, that's what I'd say.

CHRISTINA (*meditatively, after a pause*): So.

MILES: So . . . what?

CHRISTINA: I was thinking of Arthur. . . .

MILES (*moving closer*): Stop thinking of Arthur.

CHRISTINA: . . . He'd not like to hear a thing like that.

MILES: . . . Christina, can we talk about me for a moment? (*He puts his arm lightly round her. She makes*

*no objection.*) I've always been what is known as a reprehensible character. I'll spare you the worst details till your ankle's better, but let me put you roughly in the picture. I've had every social advantage; I was educated at two very good public schools, had nearly a whole year at Oxford, and have not so far actually broken off relations with the Foreign Office. And in spite of all that, a reprehensible character. (*He holds her a little closer. She still makes no objection.*) To-night, for instance. Suppose what happened to-night had happened with some other girl. I should undoubtedly have made love to her. It wouldn't have meant anything and when Alex walked in, that would have been the end of that. But with you, that isn't what happened at all. I was about to start, I admit. And Alex walked in, but it wasn't the end of anything. It was the opposite. Something had happened to me that's completely undermined my whole outlook on life. I doubt if I'm even a reprehensible character any more. (*Holding her very closely now.*) What can you say to that, Christina?

CHRISTINA: You're off to the Arctic Circle, in the morning.

[*Miles, momentarily taken aback, is about to answer when Alex comes down the stairs and into the room. She has taken off her coat.*]

ALEX: Miles, I hate to interrupt anything, but don't you think you ought to go to bed?

[*Miles rises, glaring at her.*]

You have to ring the airways people at six tomorrow.

MILES (*staring in front of him, with dawning excitement*): Of course! That's the answer!

ALEX (*in some annoyance*): The answer to what?
MILES (*to Christina*): To your one and only objection! (*To Alex, excitedly.*) I'm not going to ring them, at six or any other hour. I'm not going to the airport. I am not going to Baffin Bay!
ALEX: It's certainly time you went to bed.
MILES: If you think I'm fooling, you never made a bigger mistake in your life. D'you know where I'm going, Alex? I'm going to the West Indies—with Christina!

[*There is a momentary silence. Christina is about to speak, when Alex, with a glare at Miles, turns on her.*]

ALEX (*in a menacing tone*): Miss Deed . . .
MILES: It's no use talking to her, she doesn't know about it yet. (*To Christina.*) Christina, you've heard of cocoa . . .
ALEX: Miles—it's very late—we're all tired. . . .
MILES: I'm not a bit tired. I was, but I'm not now. I don't know about Christina, but she doesn't look it. You look a bit tired, Alex, I admit. . . .
ALEX: Never mind about me. . . .
MILES: All right—I just don't want you to exert yourself to no purpose. I know my own mind about this with the utmost clarity. I'm going to resign from the F.O. I'm going to write to Toby Smollett and tell him I'm with him in cocoa to the last bean! (*As Alex makes to speak.*) I know. You think I'm insane. A nice, comfortable connection with Foreign Affairs—two delightful years in Clapham Junction, on ice . . . Podgy Cartwright and a dear little igloo for two. Not on your life! This is one mad dog of an Englishman who is *not* going out in the Mid*night* Sun! (*Crosses to hall doors.*)
ALEX: Miles. . . .
MILES (*at door*): I shall write both the letters now.

[*He makes to go—pauses and looks from Christina to Alex and back to Christina.*]

And Christina—if your Irish blood is worth anything at all, pay no attention to Alex. She's a direct descendant of Oliver Cromwell!

[*He goes out to hall and upstairs. There is a moment of silence.*]

CHRISTINA: Will I cook you some supper? Without any impertinence of course.
ALEX (*dryly*): And *with* what?
CHRISTINA (*seeing no innuendo*): I think I saw an egg.
ALEX (*coldly*): Thank you very much, but I had some dinner—as luck would have it. Miss Deed—I think I ought to tell you that my brother sometimes has ideas in the middle of the night that rather differ from those he acts on in the daytime.
CHRISTINA: I'm sure he'll not be the only one.
ALEX: He has a very impulsive nature . . . he'll conceive a sudden passion for some—someone and then equally suddenly lose all interest in her. I remember in the war—just before D-Day—there was a poor little Wren in Lyme Regis . . . then there was a French girl—supposed to be in the Resistance . . . I'm being very frank because I'm sure you'd much rather I were. . . .
CHRISTINA (*giving her a glance*): I read about the West Indies once, in one of the Sunday papers. They said it was a sub-tropical paradise.
ALEX: Not in the hurricane season. Christina—you don't mind if I call you that, it's so late at night for anything else . . . Miles has a vitally important job to go to in Canada—it's probably the turning point in his career. . . .

CHRISTINA : I've an idea that to-night is a bit of a turning point in mine.

ALEX : I'm very anxious that Miles shouldn't make a wrong decision.

CHRISTINA : I'm anxious not to, myself. Still—it's a short life, or a dull one, that has only one turning point. . . .

ALEX : That's a most irresponsible attitude.

CHRISTINA : It's not me that's responsible for it. It's Arthur. You have to look on the bright side when you're driven to it.

ALEX : Arthur ? Is he the. . . ?

CHRISTINA : We were engaged to be married, but he's given me my freedom. So now I'm bound to turn, one way or another.

ALEX : I think Arthur's being extremely impetuous. He must realise that . . . all this with Miles hasn't amounted to anything. (*With apprehension.*) Has it ?

CHRISTINA : Not as yet, it's not.

ALEX (*relieved*) : Well, doesn't he realise that ?

CHRISTINA : He doesn't even know about it.

ALEX (*surprised*) : Doesn't know ?

CHRISTINA (*shaking her head*) : It wasn't on that account at all. It was after he met the other woman.

ALEX : Which other woman ?

CHRISTINA : He's keeping her anonymous. Wild horses won't drag it out of him. Even I couldn't. So there it is—she's got him and I've lost him.

ALEX : But you won't give him up just like that—without so much as a counter-attack ?

CHRISTINA : There's no use fighting about it. Not with Arthur. Once an idea's in his head, you can never get it out again.

ALEX (*in a tone of finality*) : Oh.

CHRISTINA : Of course, if he knew what's happened

now . . . Still, there it is, I don't suppose I shall ever see him again. . . .

ALEX: Where is Arthur at the moment?

CHRISTINA: He'll be in the Guard Room, they call it—and you can't go in there.

ALEX: The Guard Room here—at St. James's?

CHRISTINA: Till to-morrow morning, then he'll be away to Wellington Barracks, and there's no getting at them at all in a place like that.

[*Alex, with an air of determination, crosses to the telephone and starts to dial; Christina watches delighted, but with apparent unconcern.*]

It's all the same, anyway. I never did believe in flogging a dead horse—especially if there's no way of doing it.

ALEX (*into telephone*): Hullo—is that the Guard Room?

[*Christina listens eagerly.*]

I'd like to speak to Major Ashley, please.

[*Christina shows some dismay.*]

He's what? Oh, in bed? Then wake him up, will you. . . .

CHRISTINA (*agitatedly*): Oh, no—please. . . .

[*She makes signals at Alex to stop. Alex waves them aside.*]

Miss Cornwall—I'll take full responsibility. Thank you (*she holds on. To Christina.*) There's no need to be alarmed.

CHRISTINA (*who certainly is*): It was only just a word I wanted with Arthur, not a vengeance on him.

ALEX: Arthur won't get into any trouble.
CHRISTINA (*agitated*): D'you think not! There are things he's done that are not in your King's Regulations. . . .
ALEX: I promise you. (*Into telephone.*) Guy, I'm sorry about this, but it's rather vital—no, no, it's not about us . . . well, I *will*, I promise you, but I simply haven't had a moment . . . You have a sentry called Arthur. . . . Darling, I know you don't call them by their Christian names—he's the one that was on duty about ten, outside this house and he's just broken off his engagement. Now he's making a terrible mistake . . . His ex-fiancée is here and if you could send Arthur over for just ten minutes . . . I know it is, Guy, but it's terribly urgent and important. . . .

[*Miles comes down the stairs, with two letters in envelopes. He pauses in the doorway.*]

(*persuasively*) . . . and also it would be a really sweet personal favour to me . . . . (*relieved and pleased.*) You're an angel, Guy. (*Briskly.*) Yes, send him over to the lobby door. Of course you'll get him back. Good-bye.

[*She rings off and turns—to see Miles in the doorway, glaring at her accusingly.*]

MILES (*militantly*): Send who over?
ALEX (*calmly defiant*): Arthur. (*A little uncomfortably.*) He . . . begged Guy for permission to see Christina.
MILES (*dryly*): As a really sweet personal favour to you.

[*Alex ignores this.*]

ALEX (*to Christina*): If you can get up the stairs, the first door on the right is a bedroom.

MILES (*in a vetoing tone*): She's not going to see Arthur in a bedroom!

ALEX (*sweetly*): Mayn't she even wash her hands? (*To Christina.*) I've put some things out for you. The bathroom is just beyond.

CHRISTINA: Thanks. I'll be hopping up then.

[*She hops out. Alex closes the doors.*]

MILES: I know exactly what you're up to, Alex, and it's a waste of energy. (*Indicating envelopes.*) Foreign Office—Cocoa.

[*He starts for lobby door.*]

ALEX: All right, post your letters. I'm going to do what I can, for Christina's sake. (*Miles pauses.*) She's rather a sweet girl—you probably don't realise it. . .

MILES: *I* don't realise it! She's the sweetest girl you ever met in my life! And now you keep out of hers!

ALEX (*patiently*): Miles—I think you'll admit I've never interfered before in any of your many . . .

MILES: I should hope not.

ALEX: . . . I've merely been called upon, frequently, to help clear up the débris. I don't want to have to go to the West Indies this time to do it.

MILES: There will be no débris. I'm going to get married and give no further trouble to anybody.

ALEX: I remember you saying those very words in 1947—in the *Queen Elizabeth*

MILES: Will you please not quote me. Words depend entirely on their context. One may say things at sea that . . .

ALEX: It was in Southampton Water.

MILES: Quite. And I'd only known the girl for two hours.

ALEX : Whereas Christina, of course. . . . .

MILES : Alex—haven't you any soul above clock watching? Don't you understand that days and weeks and months don't enter into it? It's something you can feel in a single moment. Look at you and Guy . . . No, don't look at you and Guy. That's taken rather longer. . . . Yes, look at you and Guy. Five years and still you dance about on the brink, your feet getting colder every minute. Why don't you do what I'm going to do—dive in!

ALEX : And hit your head on the bottom.

MILES : I know. I know all the arguments. The fact remains that Christina has something for me—don't ask me what it is. . . .

ALEX : I can tell you what it is.

MILES : I shall disregard that.

ALEX : And what have you for Christina? What does she say about all this? Or are you just taking that for granted? Not to mention Arthur.

MILES : Arthur was never even in the running.

ALEX : They were merely engaged.

MILES : You don't seriously imagine that Christina was ever in love with him? She only really knows him by post.

ALEX : The post is very reliable these days.

MILES : And apart from that, Arthur is unshakeably in love with someone else.

ALEX : Or thinks he is.

MILES : And apart from all that—I have an idea that Christina is not unattracted to me.

ALEX : She'll feel better in the morning.

MILES : She'll make up her own mind about that.

ALEX : I hope she will—without your trying to do it for her.

MILES : Without either of us trying to.

ALEX : All right. Either of us. Do you agree?

MILES (*after a moment's hesitation*) : Certainly. I can perfectly well afford to.
ALEX (*warningly*) : Honour bright ?
MILES : Honour bright.

[*The figure of Arthur appears outside lobby door. He knocks, nervously.*]

ALEX :
MILES : } Arthur !
MILES : I'll go and tell Christina. (*Starts for door.*)
ALEX : You'll do nothing of the kind. *I'll* tell her. (*He stops.*) Let him in. And then come straight upstairs.

[*She goes out and upstairs—as Arthur knocks again.*]

MILES (*ferociously*) : Come in !

[*The lobby door opens and Arthur enters. He is nervous and unhappy. He hesitates in the lobby, closing the door behind him.*]

(*coldly*) Wait here.

[*He glares at Arthur and goes towards hall. As he does so, Christina comes downstairs, limping. She is wearing dressing-gown, pyjamas and slippers, belonging to Alex. They meet in the doorway. Miles stares at her clothes and is on the point of speaking, when. . . .*]

ALEX (*from upstairs, menacingly*) : Miles !
MILES (*defeatedly*) : Coming.

[*He goes on upstairs. Christina hesitates a moment in the doorway, deciding on a plan of action. She glances towards lobby, then she suddenly braces herself and walks airily and casually to the settee, wincing each time she puts the injured foot down and pulling an awful face, but managing to show no sign of a limp. She reaches casually for the cigarette*

*box on the stool. Arthur is staring—then he snaps out of it and comes in.*]

ARTHUR: What are you doing—still here—in those? (*He is staring at the pyjamas.*)
CHRISTINA: Arthur! I'd no idea you were there!
ARTHUR: He said he was going to see to you.
CHRISTINA: He has.
ARTHUR (*alarmed*): Eh?
CHRISTINA: Is it likely he'd push a young girl out at this time of night with nowhere to go, and only one leg to go there?
ARTHUR: You can't spend the night here.
CHRISTINA: Why not?
ARTHUR: Why not! Anything might happen!
CHRISTINA (*lighting cigarette*): You shouldn't judge others by yourself.
ARTHUR: If I did, I wouldn't be worrying.
CHRISTINA: Well, it's no business of yours now, is it?
ARTHUR: Then, why did you send for me?
CHRISTINA: It wasn't me that sent for you. It must have been Miles.
ARTHUR (*outraged*): Who!
CHRISTINA: Mr Cornwall. He's a lovely man, when you get to know him—even apart from his looks. We had cutlets for supper. . . .
ARTHUR (*exasperatedly*): Chris. . . .
CHRISTINA: He wanted me to be sure, very likely. I'll not be making a mistake. As if I'm not old enough to know what I shall be doing!
ARTHUR (*aghast*): Doing? Just exactly what's passed between you and Mr Cornwall?
CHRISTINA: Well, he promised me a pound, but that was before.
ARTHUR: Before?

CHRISTINA: Before we got to be the way we are now.

ARTHUR (*desperately*): Chris—I've been sent out of the Guard Room by Major Ashley—special compassionate grounds, ten minutes and ten only—if this is just more of your larks . . .

CHRISTINA (*angrily*): Larks! That's a good one, coming from you! Who was it got me into here in the first place? Who was it had me come chasing all over the Irish Channel and twisting my ankle? And me that's been saving up for half the year, so that I could be married in nylon all the way up!

ARTHUR: Now, listen, Chris . . .

CHRISTINA: As far as I'm concerned there was no sense in troubling you. I'm nothing to you any more, you've given me that plain enough—haven't you?

ARTHUR (*after a moment's pause*): Still . . .

CHRISTINA (*not looking at him*): Still what?

ARTHUR: I'd sooner you got safe back to Ireland.

CHRISTINA (*rounding on him, furious*): You needn't worry, Arthur. It'd be a poor look out if I had to rely on you for my guardian angel. And now you'd better be getting safe back to your Major Ashley—you've only had five of your ten minutes, so maybe they'll make you a corporal for working overtime! (*She turns violently away.*)

ARTHUR (*hesitating*): Well, if he starts anything, there's a sentry outside.

CHRISTINA: I don't care if there's half the Army. (*Violently.*) Leave me alone, can't you.

[*Arthur hesitates—then turns to go.*]

And I'm sorry for your next one—whatever she's done to deserve it!

[*Arthur makes to retort angrily, thinks better of it and goes towards lobby.*]

(*in a choked voice*) I'll write you from the West Indies.

[*Arthur pulls up with a jolt.*]

I'll send you a food parcel.

ARTHUR: What d'you mean—West Indies?

CHRISTINA: He's going there and there's not much reason I won't be going with him.

ARTHUR: Who's going there?

CHRISTINA: Mr Cornwall. (*Hurriedly.*) Miles.

ARTHUR (*really shocked*): You wouldn't do a thing like that? (*Suddenly relieved.*) He wouldn't ask you to, either.

CHRISTINA (*defiantly*): Just keep your eye open for the stamp. (*She suddenly bursts into tears.*)

ARTHUR (*distressed*): Chris . . . (*going to her*) Christina.

[*He tries to touch her, she fends him off.*]

CHRISTINA (*in tears*): Go on to your Guard Room. .

ARTHUR: Chris—I didn't want to upset you . . .

CHRISTINA: Well, you did upset me.

ARTHUR: I was only honest—I had to tell you sooner or later . . .

CHRISTINA (*drying eyes*): Then why won't you tell me who she is?

ARTHUR: I told you I can't tell you.

CHRISTINA: If you had any decency in you, you would.

ARTHUR: There's reasons, I tell you.

CHRISTINA: I suppose she told you not to.

ARTHUR (*defensively*): I've never spoken to her. (*Immediately regrets having let it out.*)

CHRISTINA (*startled, then incredulous*): You've . . . never spoken to her?

ARTHUR (*uncomfortable*): No.

CHRISTINA: How did you get engaged? Deaf and dumb language?
ARTHUR: I never said we were engaged. All I said was—I was in love with her.
CHRISTINA: With the look of her, is that it?
ARTHUR: No, it's not.
CHRISTINA: Oh, in spite of her looks, then?
ARTHUR: She's very good-looking.
CHRISTINA: Is she fair?
ARTHUR: She's . . . I'm not going to talk about her.
CHRISTINA: No, of course you're not. Because she doesn't exist at all.
ARTHUR: She does exist.
CHRISTINA: You're nothing more than a miserable coward, that's all you are . . .
ARTHUR (*angrily*): I'm not a coward.
CHRISTINA: If you've changed your mind, why couldn't you have the gumption to say so? There was no need to go making up a woman . . .
ARTHUR (*hotly*): I didn't make her up.
CHRISTINA: Then who is she?
ARTHUR (*angrily*): Why can't you mind your own business!
CHRISTINA (*flaring right up*): Well, Holy St. Patrick, if it's not my business, with us supposed to be . . . (*She hops at him furiously.*)
ARTHUR: I didn't mean that. . . .
CHRISTINA: You never mean anything, and if you do, you don't intend to! You're just a treacherous, traitorous, good-for-nothing and despicable son-of-Satan—there isn't a word to describe you!
ARTHUR: I've been straight with you. . . .
CHRISTINA: Straight you call it. . . .

[*They are at the tops of their voices as Miles enters from hall. He is delighted to find them having a row.*]

MILES : Ah.

[*Coming in, as Arthur springs to attention.*]

Having your last few words ?
CHRISTINA : We've had them—near enough. (*To Arthur.*) You needn't trouble to say yours. You can post it to Honolulu !
MILES : Jamaica.
CHRISTINA (*to Miles*) : And I'm ready to go there as soon as you please. (*She hops across towards him.*)
MILES (*putting an arm round her*) : Darling. Bless you.
CHRISTINA : You were right enough—it was me that was soft in the head.
MILES : Did I say that ?
CHRISTINA : You said he invented her and that's about the truth of it.
ARTHUR : I didn't. I didn't invent anyone.
CHRISTINA : He's seen her, but he's never spoken to her and he doesn't know whether she's dark or fair !
ARTHUR : I do know.
MILES (*triumphantly, to Christina*) : Just what you said—no imagination. (*Blandly.*) Stand easy, Arthur, won't you ?
CHRISTINA : And on top of that, he says he can't say who she is.
MILES : Of course he can't. Arthur, why not be honest. . . ?

[*He breaks off as he sees Arthur is staring past him with a glazed and horrified look. He turns, to see that Alex is entering from the stairs. She is now wearing pyjamas and a house-coat.*]

ALEX (*threateningly, as she comes in*) : Miles, I thought we . . .

[*She breaks off as she sees Arthur, who can't take his eyes off her.*]

It's him !

MILES : Who ?

ALEX : That sentry . . . the one I told you about that . . . look at him now !

CHRISTINA (*as she suddenly realises the meaning of Arthur's behaviour*) : Arthur !

[*Arthur is still staring at Alex. Miles looks from Christina to Arthur to Alex. Realisation dawns.*]

MILES : Good God Almighty !

[*There is a knock at the lobby door and Guy comes in. Arthur springs to attention.*]

GUY (*smiling genially at Alex*) : Well, now, everything nicely squared up ?

MILES : Oh, nicely !

*He starts to laugh, a little wildly, as . . .*

*The Curtain falls*

# ACT THREE

*Next morning.*

*The curtains are still drawn and the lights on, but daylight can be seen beyond the glass panes of the lobby door.*

*Christina, Miles and Alex have dropped off to sleep after a night of discussion, evidenced by teacups and saucers on the floor, scattered ashtrays and a tray of tea-things on the stool by end of settee. Christina is asleep in armchair down right. Alex likewise in wing chair above fireplace, Miles with his coat and shoes off lies full length on the settee, one foot on the tea-tray. He is snoring rhythmically. He moves in his sleep.*

MILES (*plaintively, in his sleep*): Arthur.

[*Christina wakes with a start, looks dazedly to see who's spoken. Miles is now snoring calmly again. Christina stretches and gets up—tries her ankle and finds it is much better. She starts to pick up tea-things, lifting Miles's foot gently from the tray. He gives one louder snore, as she does so, and then goes on as before. Christina's eyes fall on Alex. She crosses and looks down at her appraisingly. Goes to fireplace and looks in mirror to compare her own looks with Alex's. Decides they ought to be able to hold their own. Looks back at Alex again, more closely. As she is doing so, Alex wakes. Christina hastily converts her action into that of bending to pick up tea-cup and saucer from floor by Alex's chair. She goes to collect others. Alex stretches, sits up—sees the daylight beyond lobby door.*]

ALEX (*in a surprised and sleepy tone*): It isn't morning, is it?

CHRISTINA (*frigidly*): It is. Good morning.

[*She puts cups and saucers on tray and carries it out to the kitchen, disappearing through swing door. Alex is yawning.*

*The Palace clock outside starts to strike the half hour. Alex looks casually at her wrist-watch, reacts in alarm and dismay. She glances at Miles, who is still sleeping, and crosses quickly and quietly to the telephone. Dials a number, keeping half an eye on Miles. As she finishes. . .*]

MILES (*in his sleep*): Hullo?

ALEX (*glances towards him, startled—then into telephone quietly and urgently*): Departure enquiries, please. (*She glances apprehensively towards Miles as she holds on.*) Hullo? I know I'm three hours late, I suppose Flight 51 for Gander has . . . Oh. When? Thank you very much. (*She rings off.*)

MILES (*without moving, or opening his eyes*): Whether it's gone or not, I am not going on Flight 51 to Gander.

[*Alex is momentarily taken aback. She pulls the curtains of the right-hand window.*]

ALEX (*ignoring his remark*): It hasn't gone. Twelve-thirty. (*She crosses towards back window.*)

MILES: If I didn't make that abundantly clear last night during four hours of otherwise unprofitable discussion, I don't know what I did say.

ALEX (*pulling back curtains of back window*): I much prefer not to remember. (*Goes to light switch.*)

MILES (*delightedly*): I know I put *you* very properly in your place. All these years of well-bred distaste at my mere peccadilloes and what have you been happily stirring up? Dark passions in the sentry boxes!

[*Alex makes to reply, scorns it and switches off lights.*]

MILES: Young soldiers with fixed bayonets and roving eyes! (*He laughs and rises, only to pause midway*

*in painful stiffness.*) Damn, I've twisted something. (*In alarm.*) Or broken my back.

ALEX (*who has come down to above settee*): Gray's *Anatomy.*

[*She picks book up from where Miles has been sleeping on it.*]

MILES: No wonder I had a nightmare about Podgy. That was a waste of four guineas. Oh, no, it wasn't —I remember now—I charged it to Father. (*In sudden alarm.*) Where's my Christina?

ALEX: Washing the tea-things. Or herself. Or both at the same time.

MILES (*putting on shoe*): Well, I'll give you one thing. You were right enough yesterday morning about Arthur. Completely nuts.

ALEX: Thank you very much.

MILES: Well, look what he's done—turned down a girl like Christina for an impossible character like you. You said yourself you thought he looked crazy and that was before we even discovered that he worships the very door you go in and out of.

ALEX: From the little I saw of Arthur, I think he's very nice. Simple . . .

MILES: Simple, is right. (*Looks for other shoe.*)

ALEX: . . . And really completely uncomplicated. I'm not in the least surprised that Christina is in love with him.

MILES: Christina is not and never was. (*He sees shoe by fireplace and hops towards it, one shoe on and one off.*)

ALEX (*dryly*): Catching.

MILES (*ignoring this*): Uncomplicated! If little Arthur's uncomplicated, then Freud has just been having a great big romp with all of us. (*Puts on shoe.*)

ALEX: And Arthur, of course, is still in love with Christina.

MILES: He just doesn't know it. Or does he get the two of you confused?

ALEX: Use a little imagination, Miles. Think of a boy like that, tied to one place for hours at a time. Naturally, he day-dreams. . . .

MILES (*dryly*): In my O.C.T.U. days, I did one or two spells of guard duty myself. . . .

ALEX: And you just thought about the password for two hours.

MILES: As a matter of fact, that's perfectly true, I did. I was trying to remember the damn thing. In any case, I did *not* fall in love with the Naafi Staff every time they showed their faces.

ALEX: Nor has Arthur. And if he hadn't been marched off by Guy after the first five minutes, I'm sure I could have made him realise it.

MILES: Guy took the only possible course—retire in disorder to review the position. (*Delightedly.*) I shall never forget his face as long as I live! It was sort of par-boiled. This wasn't just the Guardsman who dropped it, it was the Guardsman who dropped one of the biggest bricks of all time—and right on Guy's own toe! (*Picks up jacket from chair and holds it over his arm.*) He's probably been sitting up all night, convinced that the Kremlin is behind the whole thing.

ALEX: Guy has a lot more common sense than you think. By now I'm sure he's put the entire piece of nonsense right out of his mind.

MILES: That's exactly what Christina and I are going to do. Only we're going to do it in the West Indies.

ALEX: So you said last night, whenever there was a gap in the conversation. I don't seem to remember

Christina committing herself, one way or the other.
MILES (*patiently*): Christina told Arthur so to his very face, before you made your somewhat shattering personal appearance.

[*Christina enters from the kitchen, by the swing door. She is dressed again, wearing her coat and has her handbag slung on her shoulder.*]

(*to Christina, as she enters.*) Hullo, darling, how are you this morning? How did you sleep? How's the ankle?

[*Christina is picking up her scarf.*]

(*staring.*) Where are you going?
CHRISTINA (*putting on scarf, with a glance at Alex*): I thought I'd better find myself a new address.
MILES: I'll find you an address. You won't need one for long. I must get a shave first—and then I'll have to get my luggage from the airport—oh, and my credentials, I'll need them to give back to the chief.
ALEX: That'll be a jolly interview.
MILES (*dryly*): He had two years of Russians walking out on him at UNO. I think he'll survive my small departure.

[*He goes out and upstairs. Christina eyes Alex in a guarded kind of way. Alex smiles.*]

ALEX: I should take your things off again. Miles is always hours in the bathroom and then of course he'll need some breakfast. . . .
CHRISTINA (*stiffly*): I beg your pardon concerning the cutlets.
ALEX (*concerned*): Did I mention those last night?
CHRISTINA: You did.

ALEX: Well, it must have been in the heat of the moment. I beg *your* pardon for doing so.
CHRISTINA (*stiffly*): You're quite welcome.
ALEX: Won't you sit down? (*Christina sits.*) I'm afraid I also said one or two things about Arthur.
CHRISTINA: Arthur means nothing to me. Anyone can say anything. It means nothing at all to me.
ALEX: I can quite see that—after the way he's behaved. And of course he means even less to me—he just rather threw me off my balance. After all, I had no more idea that I'd . . . alienated his affections than—you had that you'd done the same with our meat ration.
CHRISTINA (*a little mollified*): I'm sure he had no intention to be rude.
ALEX: Rude?
CHRISTINA: Saying he was gone about you. He just gets these crazy ideas. (*Hurriedly.*) I've no intention of being rude myself.
ALEX: Don't apologise. All I'm concerned with is what can be done to restore Arthur to sanity.
CHRISTINA: I've no doubt it'll wear off in the course of time.
ALEX: Like a stomach-ache.
CHRISTINA: I've no doubt he only wants you because it's something he's no chance of having, like the crock of gold at the end of the rainbow.
ALEX (*smiling*): Oh, so I'm a crock now am I?
CHRISTINA: Seeing you time and again, that's what'll be sort of nagging at him. You can't blame him so much really. Stuck like that in a sentry box, just one of the sights of London. . . .
ALEX: Of course you could quite easily let him see *you* time and again, couldn't you—if you weren't in the West Indies?
CHRISTINA: You don't think I'd want to force

myself on anyone? Not that I could, if they wouldn't let me.

ALEX: Not if they were stuck in a sentry box? (*Slowly.*) Christina . . . I rather think I've had an inspiration . . . You do housework, don't you, and just as it happens, we've room for one more on the staff here. . . .

CHRISTINA: So I believe—you've not had a maid for months.

ALEX: Miles always exaggerates. We've a wonderful man called Langley, but we could very well do with someone else. You'd be doing us a favour, but wouldn't we be doing you one?

CHRISTINA: It all depends, I suppose. Of course, if anything *should* come between me and Miles and the West Indies. . . .

ALEX: Three pounds a week, choose your own afternoon off—and Arthur almost under your feet! What about it?

CHRISTINA: The kitchen is not what it might be.

ALEX: It will be. The Office of Works have already promised to do something about it.

CHRISTINA: When was that?

ALEX: Oh, years ago. (*Hastily.*) So it's bound to happen almost any minute. (*Impressively.*) And the windows look straight on to the sentry boxes. . . .

[*She looks hopefully at Christina. Christina hesitates. Miles comes downstairs and into the room. He has a dressing-gown on over vest and trousers, and one side of his face is covered with shaving soap. He gives Alex a suspicious look.*]

MILES (*bitterly to Alex*): Honour bright. Christina, on second thoughts I think you *had* better run out. If you slipped away from that hotel without a word to anyone they'll probably be dragging the Liffey

for you. You'd better send a wire to say you won't be back. There's a very good Post Office in St. James's Street.

ALEX: There's a very good telephone here.

MILES: By the time she gets Telegrams on that, hers could be in Dublin. (*To Christina.*) Here's half-a-crown and a latch key to let yourself in by. (*He gives her the key and half-a-crown.*)

CHRISTINA (*with a bare glance at Alex*): I'll not be long.

MILES: Take your time, walk round a bit, it's a lovely day.

[*She goes out into hall and disappears towards front door. Miles looks accusingly at Alex.*]

And now, my sweet, will you please, once and for all, put an end to these machinations?

ALEX: No.

[*Miles crosses with determination to the telephone—dials a number.*]

MILES (*as he does so*): How singularly fortunate that fellow was in the conundrum of one's youth, "Brothers and sisters have I none . . ." (*Raises receiver to ear.*) Bookings, please. (*Finds he has ear-piece in shaving soap and transfers it to other ear.*) Bookings? This is Mr Cornwall—I had a reservation on Flight 51 yesterday to Gander . . . I know it hasn't, that's why I want to cancel it. Yes, permanently. Thank you very much. Good morning. (*He rings off—turns to Alex.*) Good morning.

[*He smiles winningly at her and goes upstairs. Alex promptly crosses to telephone and dials.*]

ALEX (*raising receiver to ear*): Bookings, please.

(*Finds shaving soap on earpiece and wipes it off with a duster from the drawer of the telephone table.*) Bookings? I'm speaking for Mr Cornwall—he rang you a moment or two ago . . . yes, well, he now wants to cancel his cancellation. That's right, he's just a little eccentric. Thank you very much. Good morning.

[*She rings off. Arthur enters by lobby door. His manner is urgent and a little surreptitious. As he comes into the room, Alex turns. The surprise is mutual. Arthur looks rather aghast.*]

Arthur!

ARTHUR: I beg your pardon. (*Turns to go.*)

ALEX: No, don't go away—I'm very glad to see you.

ARTHUR: I'm sorry—I didn't really . . . I was looking for Christina.

ALEX: She's not here. . . .

ARTHUR (*alarmed*): She hasn't gone? Not with Mr. Cornwall?

ALEX (*shaking her head*): She went out. She'll be back in a few minutes.

[*Arthur looks relieved.*]

Come and sit down.

ARTHUR: I've only got a minute or two. I haven't got that as a matter of fact—thank you very much.

ALEX: Can I give her a message?

ARTHUR: Well, I—I wanted to ask her not to go. To where she said she would.

ALEX: You mean—the West Indies?

ARTHUR: That's right.

ALEX: You don't want her to go?

ARTHUR: That's right.

ALEX: I think she'd want to know why. (*Smiling.*)

ARTHUR (*blurting it*): I don't think it's right.
ALEX (*a little disconcerted*): Not—right?
ARTHUR: Well, it's—what I mean is—Mr Cornwall . . . at least, so I've heard. . . .
ALEX: Perfectly true.
ARTHUR: So you see, I . . . well—I don't think it'd be permanent.
ALEX (*looking at him in surprise*): You'd prefer it to be permanent?
ARTHUR (*shocked*): Well, I should think so. Christina's not like that.
ALEX: I'm sure she isn't. But you did rather force her into it, didn't you?

[*Arthur looks extremely embarrassed, doesn't meet her eye.*]

ARTHUR: I was going to write you a letter—about that. I didn't quite know how to say what I . . . (*looking at her.*) All I can say is, I didn't want you to think that I had the nerve to think . . . I mean, I knew it wasn't even—thinkable. It was only just in my thoughts—you can't help those . . . I wouldn't have dreamed of breathing it to anyone—I wouldn't have dreamed of it.
ALEX: It wasn't real at all, was it—even to you?
ARTHUR (*defensively*): Yes, it was.
ALEX (*looking at him shrewdly*): Is it still?
ARTHUR (*after a moment, with a shade of defiance*): Yes.
ALEX: I see. (*With sudden cheerfulness.*) Well, that's a relief. I was afraid it might not be.
ARTHUR (*astonished and a little taken aback*): You were—afraid it. . .?
ALEX: Yes. Why not? Or hadn't it ever occurred to you that I might have noticed you, too, as I . . . went in and out?
ARTHUR (*disconcerted*): No—it hadn't.

ALEX: I had noticed you, Arthur.
ARTHUR (*a little huskily*): You had?
ALEX: I suppose it didn't occur to you either that I might have had thoughts, too, that—didn't even seem—thinkable?
ARTHUR (*utterly disconcerted*): No, it didn't.
ALEX: As you said yourself—one can't help one's thoughts. Like you, I never dreamed that they might become reality. Now will you come and sit down?
ARTHUR: No—no—I can't really. I ought to be back. . . .
ALEX: Arthur—please.

[*He hesitates uncomfortably.*]

You're keeping me standing.

[*Arthur sits, unhappily, on settee.*]

Cigarette? (*Offers him box.*)
ARTHUR: No, thank you.
ALEX (*companionably*): Neither will I. (*She sits—near him.*) We've so much to learn about each other, haven't we?
ARTHUR (*not very enthusiastically*): Yes.
ALEX: What fun it's going to be!

[*She looks eagerly at Arthur. Arthur seems the reverse of eager. He nods faintly.*]

ALEX (*smiling*): What's the matter? D'you think you're going to be disillusioned?
ARTHUR (*awkwardly*): Miss Cornwall. . . .
ALEX (*encouragingly*): Alex.
ARTHUR: I think we ought to . . . before we . . . we've got to be practical—I mean—whatever we may have thought about each other. . . .

ALEX: Of course! We've got to know. Everything. How old are you, Arthur?

ARTHUR: I'm only twenty.

ALEX: I'm only thirty. So there's no difference there. Do you like classical music?

ARTHUR (*hopefully*): No—I don't much.

ALEX: Neither do I. That's good. These little things can break up a marriage, can't they? How many children do you want?

ARTHUR: I—haven't—really gone into it.

ALEX: Well, there's no immediate hurry. What time are you free in the evenings?

ARTHUR: I—don't know . . . I don't know if I'll *be* free—at all. . . .

ALEX: Anyway, we'll have lunch together as soon as we can and have a nice talk about all the odd things like that . . . Oh, there is one thing—and you mustn't be upset, Arthur, because after all you made the same sort of mistake with Christina—you thought you were in love with her, until you saw me . . . I thought I was in love too—with Major Ashley.

ARTHUR (*several frogs in his throat*): Major Ashley?

ALEX: So I want you to try and be as nice to him as you possibly can.

[*Christina enters from the hall. She pulls up short at sight of Arthur and Alex.*]

CHRISTINA (*with obvious displeasure*): Pardon me now! (*She turns to go.*)

ARTHUR (*desperate*): Chris . . . (*he rises*).

CHRISTINA (*scathingly*): What brought you this time—some more compassionate grounds? (*She makes again to go.*)

ALEX: Christina. (*Rising.*) I'm just going. . . .

CHRISTINA: You've no need to go, in fact, I'd much rather you stayed.

ALEX: Arthur's got something most important to say.

ARTHUR: I came specially, Chris—I haven't slept all night. . . .

CHRISTINA: Have you not? I slept like a top. (*Takes off coat.*)

ALEX (*dryly*): For a very short spin.

CHRISTINA (*with a look at Arthur*): Well, it wasn't my conscience that kept me awake. (*To Arthur.*) I've nothing to add to what I said last night. . . .

ALEX (*patiently*): If you'll just give him a chance, you may learn something to your advantage.

ARTHUR (*desperately*): I've only got a minute. Chris—I just wanted to beg you . . . not to go. Don't go anywhere—with anyone. I can't talk now and I don't know when I can—I only got out the washroom window . . . If I don't go now, there'll be worse trouble. . . .

CHRISTINA (*scathingly*): Trouble! Regulations! That's all you ever think of!

ARTHUR: It's not just that. He's sent over to the barracks for an escort—someone tipped me the wink—I'm going to be arrested. (*He makes for lobby door.*)

ALEX (*aghast*): You're what!

ARTHUR (*at lobby*): For what happened last night—and if I'm not there for it, he'll be properly after me. I'll be a deserter as well.

[*He hurries out by lobby door. Alex and Christina are dumbfounded.*]

CHRISTINA (*bitterly*): There! There's a beautiful thing, isn't it? Holy Saint Christopher!

ALEX: Guy.

CHRISTINA (*hotly*): And who brought him into it? He'll get into no trouble, that's what you said. No trouble! Just to be court-martialled and the Lord knows what after that . . . (*Recovering herself.*) I beg your pardon—I'm under your roof and I've eaten your rations and I'll apologise in a minute . . . (*Her temper rising again.*) There's a fine outcome to the whole thing . . . something to my advantage, you said!

ALEX: There was something. He's cured and he knows it. If you take that job I offered you, the cure'll be complete.

CHRISTINA: With me in St. James's Palace and him in one of those glass houses in the middle of Lord knows where! What use would that be? I might as well be on the other side of the world. (*Ominously.*) Or in the West Indies. I couldn't stay here. (*With a slight glance at Alex.*) Unless, of course, by some kind of a lucky chance, Arthur were to get let off. . . .

[*Alex, with sudden decision, goes purposefully to the telephone.*]

ALEX (*as she goes*): Don't you worry—I'm going to see about this. (*Dialling.*) I'm going to see about it straight away. (*Into telephone.*) Guard Room? Is Major Ashley there? Oh, well, will you try and find him? (*To Christina, anxiously.*) We must catch him before the parade or it'll be too late. . . .

[*Christina looks anxious. Miles comes down the stairs. He is now dressed again.*]

(*into telephone, dismayed.*) He isn't? (*Urgently.*) Well, will you give him a message, please, the moment he comes in? It's Miss Cornwall and it's very urgent indeed. Ask him to come over to Archery House.

(*She rings off, turns—to meet Miles' accusing eye.*) I don't know what the Office of Works is coming to.

MILES (*artlessly*): What, in particular, do you want them to come to?
ALEX (*vaguely*): Oh—it's a pipe somewhere—stopped up. I must go and wash—if I look anything like I feel. . . .
MILES (*nodding, dryly*): You couldn't possibly face the plumber.

[*Alex eyes him as she crosses to door.*]

I take it we're not getting any breakfast?
ALEX (*sweetly*): No. It's a gas pipe.

[*She goes out and upstairs. Christina is abstractedly looking through Gray's* Anatomy.]

MILES (*cheerfully*): Well, we'd better go out and have something. What and where, I don't know. I don't care. I've no doubt it will taste like nectar! (*Crosses to her.*)

[*Christina has stopped turning the pages and is just looking down at the book, not really seeing anything.*]

(*reproachfully*) Darling—don't keep staring at that cross-section of the abdomen. It looks extremely nasty anyway.

[*She looks up at him.*]

On the other hand, if Mr. Gray had ever studied you. . . . (*Touches her cheeks.*) I'm sure he'd have written a far nicer book.

[*He is smiling affectionately, but Christina's face is serious.*]

CHRISTINA (*anxiously*): You didn't post those letters, did you? The ones you wrote last night?

MILES (*producing envelopes from pocket*): You can do it yourself—the minute we go out. (*Gives her the letters.*) In a month we can be in the West Indies.

CHRISTINA (*with a little sigh, looking at letters*): We could have been.

MILES: What d'you mean?

CHRISTINA: If it had not been for Arthur. (*She puts letters on mantelpiece.*)

MILES (*exasperated*): Oh, Lord, who has Arthur fallen in love with now? In any case, what do you care?

CHRISTINA: It's not that I care, but if he's being arrested I couldn't be off to the West Indies.

MILES: Arrested?

CHRISTINA: He's off to have it done now, if it hasn't been done already. I couldn't go leaving Arthur behind—not behind bars.

MILES: What's he being arrested for?

CHRISTINA: Infatuation, I suppose. . . .

MILES: Infatuation! Oh, nonsense.

CHRISTINA: For what happened last night, that's what he said.

MILES: Well, look what happened last night. Deserting his post, breaking into private property and, whilst on guard duty, consorting with persons of the opposite sex. That's you.

CHRISTINA: Yes, it's all my fault. So you see I couldn't go, not with Arthur in one of those glass houses. (*With a glance at him.*) Unless, of course, by some kind of a lucky chance, Arthur were to get let off.

MILES (*as he goes to telephone*): Don't you worry, darling, I'm going to see about this. (*Dialling.*) See about it straight away. I've got a lot of influence

with Guy. After all, I *am* Alex's brother and she wouldn't dream of marrying without my consent—well, he'll believe that anyway. . . .

CHRISTINA: I felt sure you'd know what to do for the best—being a Foreign Officer and everything. . .

MILES: A what? (*Into telephone.*) Hullo, Guard Room? Good morning. Mr Cornwall here. Is Major Ashley there? (*Dismayed.*) Oh, God.

CHRISTINA: Couldn't you go and look for him?

[*Miles nods.*]

MILES (*into telephone*): Have you any idea where he is? I'll go straight across and see if I can find him. (*Alex enters from hall, now dressed.*) If you should see him first, tell him to come over to Archery House—something very urgent and important requires straightening out. Thank you very much. Good morning. (*He rings off, turns—to see Alex.*) The gas company. If we can't have breakfast, at least we can think about lunch.

ALEX (*eyeing him dryly*): I wonder if they'll really be here any sooner than the Office of Works.

MILES (*eyeing her back*): Mm, I wonder.

[*They eye each other speculatively—then simultaneously each makes a move for the lobby door. They each pause, suspiciously.*]

ALEX (*as though in surprise*): Where are you off to?

MILES (*sweetly*): Just—for a run round the Park. Where are you?

ALEX (*blandly*): Just—the same.

[*They exchange courteous smiles and continue to the lobby door. Miles makes to go through first but then reluctantly gives precedence to Alex as she looks askance at his lack of manners. Christina is looking anxiously after them, when Guy appears from the hall.*]

GUY (*a little disconcerted, as he sees Christina*): Oh.

[*Christina turns sharply.*)

Nobody in?

CHRISTINA (*staring*): So that's where you are all the time!

GUY (*giving her a look*): Someone left this key in the door. (*He moves to table with latch-key.*) I saw it, as I was passing.

[*He puts latch-key on table, turns to go. Christina, with sudden decision, plucks up her courage.*]

CHRISTINA (*urgently*): Oh—Major Ashley. . . .

[*He pauses.*]

(*with a nervous smile.*) You don't mind me calling you that—it's so early in the morning for anything else. . . ?

[*He looks at her as if she were slightly mental.*]

Mr Cornwall was looking for you.

GUY: Have to be later, I'm afraid. (*He makes for the hall again.*)

CHRISTINA: And Miss Cornwall, too. She's taking a race round the palace now!

GUY: I wanted to see her. Tell her I'll ring her after the parade. (*He again makes to go.*)

CHRISTINA: Oh no, that'll be too late. She'll be back in less than a minute, I'm certain of it.

GUY (*glancing at wrist watch*): I've a number of things to see to, I'm afraid. (*He goes to door.*)

CHRISTINA (*desperately*): Such a pity about her, too, isn't it?

GUY (*pausing*): Pity?

CHRISTINA: About her wanting to get married, I mean.

GUY (*coming back, agitatedly*): You don't mean to say she wants to marry that young fool!

CHRISTINA: Oh, no, an older one, I think. An officer, she said. And so keen on it too, she is.

GUY (*eagerly*): Is she?

CHRISTINA: And yet she hasn't even a hope. Not while she can't leave home. Not while there's no one left to keep house for the old gentleman.

GUY (*excitedly*): You don't mean to say *that's* why. . . ?

CHRISTINA: She did ask me to take on the job, but as things are now I'm afraid. . . .

GUY (*briskly*): Oh, there won't be any need for that. None at all. Thanks very much.

[*He hurries to hall. Christina is dismayed.*]

CHRISTINA: Major Ashley! Oh, Major Ashley . . .

[*She runs out after him. There is a short, high-pitched squeak, in hall off. A moment later, Guy appears, embarrassed, carrying the apparent unconscious Christina. He carries her to the settee and puts her on it. He pats her face. No result. Exasperated, he rises and removes his bearskin, putting it on centre table, then kneels beside her, trying to raise her head. Miles enters from hall.*]

MILES: Guy!

GUY: She fainted—in the hall.

MILES: She did what? (*Crossing, in great concern.*) Christina—what's happened . . ? Is she all right. . . ?

[*He bends anxiously over Christina. She nods her head to Miles and smiles. Guy is unable to see this, as Miles is in the way. Miles smiles, turns accusingly on Guy.*]

And why did she faint in the hall?

GUY: I've no idea. She was agitated, I think. She started to call out. . . .

MILES: Call out? Why?
GUY: To try and stop me, apparently.
MILES: Stop you?
GUY: Yes. Then there was a shriek and there she was.
MILES (*dryly*): There was a shriek and there she was.
GUY: So naturally I brought her in here and started to. . . .
MILES: Started to what?
GUY: To bring her round. And that's when you came in.
MILES: And that's the best you can do?
GUY: What d'you mean? (*With sudden realisation.*) Are you suggesting. . . ?
MILES: Just put yourself in my position.
GUY (*indignantly*): I rather think you're putting yourself in mine. Dammit, you only need to ask the girl as soon as she comes to.
CHRISTINA (*stirring*): Oh — Major Ashley — what have you done!
MILES (*glaring at Guy*): There! Out of the mouths of babes . . . (*To Christina.*) Don't you worry now. I'm here. . . .
GUY: This is outrageous.
MILES: You should know.
GUY (*to Christina*): I've done nothing at all. You know that. You fainted.
CHRISTINA: I did?
GUY: You did.
CHRISTINA: Well, there must have been something made me do that.
MILES: Of course there must (*to Guy*) and I challenge you as an officer, and apparently not very much of a gentleman, to deny it. . . .
GUY: Miles—there are some things I'd like to say to you that I can't say in front of a lady.

MILES: I should think not. (*To Christina.*) Now tell me exactly what happened . . . No, perhaps you'd better not.

GUY: *I've* told you. . . .

CHRISTINA: I was in the hall with Major Ashley and suddenly everything went all black.

MILES: That's exactly what I thought happened.

GUY: Oh, hell, I'm going . . . (*He starts for lobby door.*)

MILES (*infuriatingly*): In full retreat?

[*Guy stops.*]

Christina, I think you'd better go upstairs and lie down. (*He starts to help her up.*)

CHRISTINA: Oh, I'm all right now. As luck would have it.

MILES: Yes, but there are one or two things I want to say to Major Ashley, before the Changing of the Guard. (*Turning on Guy, as he opens hall door.*) And the sooner it's changed this morning the better. . . .

[*Christina goes out and upstairs. Miles closes door.*]

(*turning on Guy*) And now, my fine fellow . . .

GUY: Miles, I've kept my temper so far, but let me tell you. . . .

MILES: Don't get so excited, Guy. I only want to help you. Heaven knows I'm broadminded . . .

GUY (*furious*): There's no question of being . . .

MILES: It doesn't look too good, you know. First of all you put that poor young thing's boy friend under arrest. . . .

GUY: Who told you that?

MILES: Never mind. Even Guard Room walls have ears. And then you come rushing over here—when

she's alone in the house—and start making military passes at her.

GUY: For the last time . . .

MILES: If wind of this should reach Alex, your matrimonial chances would look pretty poor.

GUY: You wouldn't tell Alex?

MILES: I wouldn't—no. But Christina might. She's become very friendly with Alex, and she's very upset about Arthur's arrest . . . (*With a glance at him.*) Unless, of course, by some kind of a lucky chance he were to be let off . . . (*significantly*) then I might be able to talk her into letting *you* off.

GUY (*looking at Miles reproachfully*): My God and to think we were at school together.

[*Alex comes in at lobby door.*]

ALEX: Guy, thank goodness . . . (*As she sees Miles.*) Oh.

MILES (*smiling happily*): Hullo, darling. I just happened to catch Ashley Minor, as he was passing. We were having a word or two . . .

ALEX: I want a word or two myself. D'you mind?

MILES: Not a bit. I'll go up and see if Christina's all right.

ALEX: All right?

MILES: She was involved in a little contretemps. I'll . . . tell you all about it later . . . perhaps.

[*With a glance at Guy, he goes out into hall and upstairs.*]

ALEX: Guy, thank goodness I've found you. . . . .

GUY (*eagerly*): Alex—darling—you don't know me at all! I don't mind living with your father.

ALEX (*taken aback*): You don't mind what?

GUY: Well, his living with us, then. After all, it won't be for ever, the old boy. . . . And even then it wouldn't matter.

ALEX (*staring at him*) : Guy, are you all right ?
GUY : Of course.
ALEX (*urgently*) : Then listen to me, darling, will you ? Was Miles talking to you about that boy, Arthur ?
GUY : Well—yes—he did say something.
ALEX : Don't do it. Pay no attention to a word he said.
GUY : Well, that might be a little awkward.
ALEX : Never mind how awkward it is. Guy—you don't want to upset me, do you ?
GUY : No, that's just the point. . . .
ALEX : After all, I do mean something to you, don't I ?
GUY : You know quite well, darling . . .
ALEX : Then *don't* arrest Arthur.
GUY : *Don't* . . . Oh, I see what you mean. (*A slow smile of relief comes on to his face.*) You make it sound rather important.
ALEX : It is. Very.
GUY : I don't quite see why. . . .
ALEX : Darling, never mind why. It's a family matter.
GUY : Mm, I see. I suppose that really is the difficulty.
ALEX : What difficulty ?
GUY : Well, I suppose I should be better able to see the point of letting Arthur off—if I were one of the family.
ALEX : Guy—you aren't trying to blackmail me, are you ?
GUY : Blackmail ? My dear Alex, you know me, don't you ?
ALEX (*eyeing him*) : I don't know.
GUY : It's only that I was just thinking how delightful it would be—when I go off guard this morning—if I could tell the Commanding Officer about us . . .

(*With a little smile.*) I should probably quite forget to tell him anything about Arthur at all.

ALEX (*delightedly*): Guy, you *are* blackmailing me! And you're putting me before the discipline of the regiment!

GUY: Am I? (*Gravely.*) Oh, Lord, I couldn't do that, could I? One must put the discipline of the regiment before everything . . . What a damn shame. (*Glancing at watch.*) Oh, well. Five to. I must be going. . . .

[*He picks up his bearskin.*]

ALEX (*agitated*): Guy, you can't leave me like that. . .

GUY: Well, I can't very well take you with me on parade, can I?

[*He puts on his bearskin and turns to go.*]

MILES (*entering from hall*): Guy. . . .

GUY: Can't stop, I'm afraid.

MILES (*anxiously*): You won't forget, will you?

GUY: Forget what?

MILES: That little thing I told you about.

GUY: Whatever I do, I shall do as I think fit. Regardless of the consequences.

[*He goes out with dignity, by lobby door. Both Miles and Alex are looking rather anxious. Christina comes downstairs.*]

CHRISTINA (*innocently*): Was that the officer just went off—Major Ashley?

ALEX: It was.

CHRISTINA (*not too anxiously*): I just wondered if there was any news. About Arthur.

MILES: I wouldn't know, darling. (*To Alex.*) Did you touch on the subject, Alex?

ALEX (*carefully*): Not if you didn't.

[*Christina is now looking anxious, too.*]

MILES (*to Christina*): We shall know in a few moments, anyway—if we look out there. (*Indicates back window.*) They parade out there for the Changing of the Guard.

CHRISTINA: You mean—if Arthur isn't out there, with the others . . . ?

MILES: Quite. On the other hand, if he *is* . . .

ALEX: Then for some reason or other, Guy must have decided to let him off.

MILES: Yes. For some reason or other.

[*Words of command are heard from outside in the courtyard.*]

MILES: } (*simultaneously*): There they are!
ALEX: }

[*They all hurry to the back window.*]

MILES: The markers are just falling in!

ALEX: And here comes the Guard itself!

CHRISTINA: Is he there? Or is he not?

MILES: Can't see yet. . . .

ALEX: I don't know. They always look all alike to me. . . . There's Guy!

MILES: Never mind Guy.

ALEX: I believe he looked this way. . . .

MILES: Guy wouldn't take his eyes off the parade if his head fell off in Friary Court . . . There's only one way—we shall either see Arthur or we . . . My God, I don't believe he *is* there! There's a fellow missing in the rear rank.

ALEX: Here he comes at the double . . . !

CHRISTINA: Where?

ALEX (*excitedly*): There! And he's about the same build!

MILES: Of course, he's the same build—you can't have a short, fat . . . (*Excitedly, too.*) It's Arthur!
CHRISTINA: It is! It is!
ALEX: Oh, wonderful! (*Comes downstage.*)
MILES: Good old Guy!
ALEX (*triumphantly*): Bluff as well as blackmail! I always knew he had a sense of humour!
MILES (*also coming downstage, triumphantly*): An officer and a gentleman after all! (*To Alex.*) Well, no hard feelings?
ALEX (*surprised*): None at all.

[*Christina slips out to kitchen.*]

MILES: Darling, with all your faults, at least you know when you've had it. (*Goes to mantelpiece to get letters.*)
ALEX (*increasingly surprised*): When *I've* had it!

[*A look of dawning realisation appears on her face.*]

MILES: We shall now pop out to the pillar-box and pop in a couple of letters and we shall then go off to a special celebration breakfast. (*Turning with letters.*) Christina, you'd better take charge of these. . . .

[*He breaks off as he—and we—now notice that Christina has gone.*]

Hullo, she's disappeared.
ALEX (*looking at him, dryly*): Yes. She chose a very good moment to do it.

[*Miles reacts to her tone.*]

Did Christina tell you she'd go with you—to the West Indies—if Arthur were let off?
MILES: Certainly. She couldn't go leaving Arthur behind the bars. I think it was very sweet of her.

ALEX : Very. Apart from the fact that she intimated to me that if *I* managed to get Arthur off, she'd stay here . . .

MILES : She did what !

ALEX : . . . And take a job with us, helping Langley.

MILES : Well, I'm damned. (*Laughs.*) She certainly had you for a mug, didn't she ?

ALEX : Or you.

MILES (*taken aback*) : What d'you mean ?

ALEX : Which did *she* mean ? (*Crossing to hall door.*) I warned you, didn't I, that one day you'd get an emotional kick in the pants ? (*At door.*) I'm afraid it's now being delivered. (*With a sympathetic smile.*) If you want to catch that plane, I re-booked your seat on it.

MILES (*airily*) : Wishful thinking, that's all.

ALEX : Is it ? Just give her those letters and see if she'll go out and post them.

[*She goes. Miles standing looking down at the letters, his confidence shaken. With sudden decision, he turns to make for the hall. Christina appears from the kitchen.*]

MILES : Ah—there you are, darling.

CHRISTINA (*uncertain of her reception*) : Yes. I've put the kettle on. . . .

MILES : Never mind about that. We're going out to celebrate—Arthur's reprieve and ours. Didn't I tell you I'd fix everything !

CHRISTINA : Yes. You did.

MILES : Here you are, then—yours shall be the hands that deliver the bombshell—via the ten-fifteen post . . . (*He holds out the letters.*)

[*She doesn't move.*]

Why, what's the matter, darling ?

CHRISTINA: It's nothing at all. It's just that I feel a bit peculiar.

[*There is a fractional pause.*]

MILES (*dryly*): Peculiar.
CHRISTINA (*moving to settee*): Peculiar. I think it'll be the anxiety. (*She sits.*)

MILES: About us? Or Arthur?

[*She doesn't answer.*]

I'd better get you something. There won't be any whisky, I'm afraid, for another three weeks. (*Goes to drinks cabinet.*)
CHRISTINA: There's nothing I want, thank you. Except to sit down for a while.
MILES: And miss the ten-fifteen post?

[*He opens a Coca-Cola. Christina flashes a glance towards him. She speaks in a deliberately abstracted manner.*]

CHRISTINA: I'm better away from the whisky, to tell you the truth.
MILES (*dryly, handing her glass*): Coca-Cola.
CHRISTINA (*tragically*): It's in the family. My poor father—he was never out of the saloons.
MILES: I thought that was your poor mother.
CHRISTINA: They went everywhere together. They were very united.
MILES: United they staggered, divided they fell.
CHRISTINA: It's nothing to laugh at.
MILES (*a little bitterly*): Don't think that I am.
CHRISTINA: I read in the Sunday papers once—if you've any kind of weakness, the tropic sun will find it out.
MILES: So that's what you're really anxious about? The West Indies—and whisky—and you?

CHRISTINA (*abstracted again*): From one generation to the next, we've had the whisky in our blood. Handed down. (*She sips drink.*) Not that it would be from me. (*Tragically again.*) There'd be no next generation.

MILES: You don't mean. . . ?

CHRISTINA: It's in the family, too. Our unions are never blessed.

MILES: Never ?

CHRISTINA: Never.

MILES: Well, how did your father and mother . . . ?

CHRISTINA: That was a freak of nature.

MILES: It must have been. Blessed eight times. And one of those—with you.

CHRISTINA (*suddenly, in a tone of sincerity*): Mr. Cornwall—Miles. . . .

MILES (*gently*): No, Christina. Don't unburden yourself any further. (*Sitting beside her on settee.*) I don't quite know how to say this . . . perhaps I'd better be just as honest with you—as you've been with me. You've dealt me rather a blow, I must admit. The weakness for whisky, that I think I might learn to overlook—even under a tropic sun —but the other . . . well, the truth is—old family like ours—I simply couldn't afford a union that might not be blessed. I'm quite sure you understand —don't you, Christina ?

CHRISTINA: Mr Cornwall—If I could just tell you the truth . . .

MILES (*smiling*): No, no—whatever else runs in your family . . . besides, there's really nothing more to be said, is there ?

[*She shakes her head.*]

Are you still feeling peculiar ?

[*She shakes her head again.*]

I thought you might not be.

[*He pulls her gently to her feet.*]

Wonderful stuff—Coca-Cola.

[*In a different tone, as he takes her towards hall door.*]

Christina, there's only one thing more . . . no, two things.

[*They pause at the door.*]

First . . .

[*He puts his hand to her chin and raises her face.*]

. . . whatever I have to subsist on in future, I shall never forget our—cutlets and thump. And second . . . (*he kisses her*) . . . that kettle must be boiling its head off.

[*She smiles up at him a moment, then turns and goes by the swing door. Miles stands a moment looking after her, then he turns and slowly tears the letters across, crosses to waste-paper basket and drops the pieces in it. Alex enters from hall.*]

ALEX: Miles—there's a taxi outside . . .
MILES (*turning*): Taxi . . .?
ALEX: He was here last night, he says, and you told him to call back. (*After a momentary pause.*) Shall I pay him off?
MILES: No—don't do that. He can take me to Heath Row.
ALEX (*looking at him quizzically*): The air port?
MILES (*not conceding defeat*): I told you—I have to fetch my things.

ALEX: Of course. So you did. (*She gives him a little kiss.*) Good-bye, Miles.
MILES: So long, Alex . . . (*He goes towards hall, pauses.*) I'm not quite sure when I'll be back. I wouldn't keep lunch.
ALEX: I won't.

[*Miles goes out to hall, in direction of front door. Alex stands looking after him. Sir Ralph enters briskly by lobby door, dressed as for his last exit in Act* I, *and carrying brief-case.*]

SIR RALPH (*as he comes in*): Alex, are you . . . ? (*As he sees her.*) Ah, you are . . .
ALEX: Hullo, Father. How was *Macbeth*?
SIR RALPH: Tragic. (*Putting down hat and gloves.*) I'm very late — I must get straight over to the office . . . Miles gone off all right?

[*The front door slams.*]

ALEX: Yes. He's gone.
SIR RALPH: Sorry I wasn't here to see him off . . . Still, you probably had less bother without me. . . .
ALEX (*with a smile*): Possibly.

[*Sir Ralph goes towards hall. As he does so, Christina enters from kitchen. She has on a crisp, clean maid's apron over her linen dress, is carrying dust-pan and brush.*]

CHRISTINA: Excuse me, Miss Alex . . .
SIR RALPH (*staring*): Good God! (*To Christina, incredulously*) Are you ours?
CHRISTINA: Yes, sir.
SIR RALPH: Are you here for good?
CHRISTINA: Yes, sir. I hope so.
ALEX: Christina sort of cropped up, overnight, Father. It's rather a long story. . . .

SIR RALPH (*waving her into silence*): I don't want to hear it. There's one thing you should never try to explain—and that's a miracle.

[*He goes out to hall and upstairs. The military band strikes up outside, muffled—the march that we heard at the start of Act* I.]

ALEX (*staring at Christina's apron*): Christina—where did you . . . ?

CHRISTINA (*smiling*): I found it. Will I start cleaning in here, Miss Alex?

ALEX: I wouldn't be a bit surprised. (*She smiles.*) It's the one room in the house where you can watch Arthur march off, without cricking your neck.

*Alex goes out to hall and upstairs. Christina makes for the back window, to look out. She waves, with brush, towards courtyard. The sound of the band outside is moving from the court, at back, to the street, at right. Christina runs down excitedly to the window, right, and opens it to look out. The music swells up. . . . Miles, in hat and overcoat and with something of a wild look in his eye, enters rapidly and purposefully from the direction of the front-door. For a moment, as he pauses at sight of Christina, who is unaware of his presence, we almost think he must have come back to abduct her—then he moves on, to the centre table, grabs the copy of Gray's* Anatomy *and makes resignedly off with it, out towards the front door again, as the music of the band reaches maximum volume, and with Christina waving gaily to Arthur, the*

*Curtain falls*

# GUNPOWDER, TREASON AND PLOT

*by*

*HUGH ROSS WILLIAMSON*

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*Applications for the performance of this play, whether by amateurs or professionals, should be made to the author, Hugh Ross Williamson, 193 Sussex Gardens, London, W.2. No performance may take place unless a licence has been obtained.*

This play was first produced at the Arts Theatre, Ipswich, on May 28, 1951, with the following cast :

| | |
|---|---|
| ROBERT CATESBY | *Richard Leech* |
| LADY CATESBY | *Noel Hood* |
| THOMAS WINTER | *John Ingram* |
| AMBROSE ROOKWOOD | *Jonathan Meddings* |
| ELIZABETH ROOKWOOD | *Mary Laura Wood* |
| GUY FAWKES | *Nicholas Selby* |
| FATHER HENRY GARNET, S.J. | *John Gill* |
| FATHER OSWALD TESIMOND, S.J. | *Denis Lehrer* |
| WILLIAM PARKER, BARON MONTEAGLE | *John Justin* |
| ROBERT CECIL, EARL OF SALISBURY | *Barry Phelps* |
| DICK | *Noel Harrison* |
| FIRST PURSUIVANT | *Eric Tripp* |
| SECOND PURSUIVANT | *Ian Gardiner* |
| GUARD | *Anthony Gray* |

Production by Warren Jenkins

Décor by Gillian Armitage

*The play and production won an Arts Council award in the Festival of Britain.*

*For*

*JOY SAINT*

# THE CHARACTERS

*The first play about the famous Gunpowder Plot of* 1605 *was put on immediately after the event at Bartholomew Fair where " it was the great show of the Fair, played to eighteen or twenty penny audiences, nine times in an afternoon ". It was, of course, topical propaganda, showing the conspirators as unutterable villains. This play takes a different view and is based on an interpretation of events to which documented justification will be found in the author's historical study of it,* The Gunpowder Plot.*

*It seems permissible, therefore, to introduce readers and actors to the people themselves as they were, before they meet them in the play itself.*

ROBERT CATESBY *is thirty-two, an aristocrat and a born leader of men. " With a face striking in its beauty, with singular charm of manner, over six feet in height, slender and elegant, with the courage of the lion which was his family crest, generous to a fault, decisive in judgment, he was one for whom men would—and did—die." Ambrose Rookwood admitted that he " esteemed him more dearer than anything else in the world " and Father Tesimond left on record that " he exercised an irresistible influence over the minds of those who associated with him ".*

*During his twenties he " was very wild and as he kept company with the best noblemen of the land, so he spent much above his rate ". When he was twenty-six, his wife, his father and his eldest son died. He then returned to the Catholic Faith—to which he had sat very loosely in his youth, if he had not actually apostasised—and for the last seven years of his life was dominated by one single passion—to serve the Faith.*

* The Gunpowder Plot *by Hugh Ross Williamson* (*Faber and Faber*, 1951). See also *The Month* for March and May 1952.

*" Yet Robert Catesby converted was Robert Catesby still. His energy was devoted to religious ends, but the habit of command did not fall from him. He never quite achieved the humility which would have safeguarded his zeal and to the end in certain things he kept his own counsel and defined his own conscience. As one writer expressed it, he ' was one of those most dangerous men to his own cause, a Catholic on Protestant principles. . . . He seems to have argued to himself that Pope, priests and Jesuits were not equal to the occasion; that there were times, of which his own was one, at which papal, spiritual and even biblical teaching must for the moment be set on one side whilst the secular arm struck a violent blow for relief of God's suffering people '."*

*Catesby's dress, at least in the first act, should be his favourite scarlet and gold.*

THOMAS WINTER, *Catesby's cousin, co-conspirator from the beginning and inseparable friend, is the same age, but in other ways an almost complete contrast. He is short and stocky, cool and phlegmatic, though, when he wishes, a good conversationalist. He is widely travelled, a diplomat and a linguist, speaking easily Spanish, Italian and French; a great reader, whose interests are history and philosophy. As a younger son of a landed family, he has not the same social standing as Catesby; lack of money has often confined him to the country; and he has accepted the post of secretary to his and Catesby's common cousin, Lord Monteagle. But he has a quiet self-assurance which gives him a sense of authority hardly less impressive than, though quite different from, Catesby's own.*

*His favourite dress is light blue, with a pearl-coloured cloak lined to match his doublet.*

AMBROSE ROOKWOOD *is twenty-six. Four years ago he succeeded to his father's estates in Suffolk and is thus a man of considerable wealth. An hereditary Catholic, he has been*

*educated on the Continent (not, like Catesby and Winter, at Oxford) and there is in him a certain overemphasis and excitability which make him a contrast to the others. There is the assurance of youth and wealth; there is also a passion for display in dress—and panache in general—which made a Governmental official write disapprovingly, after his capture: "There were very fair scarves made for divers of them: Rookwood made also a very fair Hungarian horseman's coat, lined all with velvet, and other apparel exceeding costly, not fit for his degree."*

*At his mansion, Coldham Hall, in Suffolk, he had one of the best stables in England and his famous horses provided one reason why he was enlisted in the conspiracy. The other reason was his entire dominance by Catesby, whom, as has been mentioned, he "esteemed dearer than anyone else in the world". Father Tesimond wrote of him: "I knew him well and loved him tenderly. He was beloved by all who knew him. He left behind him his lady, who was a very beautiful person and of a high family, and two or three little children, all of whom—together with everything he had in this world—he cast aside to follow the fortunes of this rash and desperate conspiracy."*

GUY FAWKES *is a subsidiary character in the play, as he was in the Plot, and it is important that the actor avoid any suggestion of the villain of legend. He is thirty-five and has been a professional soldier on the Continent ever since he left his home in Yorkshire at the age of twenty-three. He is tall, with brown hair and an auburn beard. The actor should concentrate on conveying first of all his soldierliness—which distinguishes his bearing from everyone else in the play—and secondly, a sense of his background. If he is, in social status, slightly inferior to the others, the difference* is *slight and his Yorkshire assurance fully makes up for it. His grandfather and his father were lawyers—his father the Notary and Advocate of the Consistory Court at York—and his stepfather (who brought him up from the age of*

*eight) a country gentleman with an estate near Knaresborough. His uncle is a merchant-stapler. His great-grandfather was Lord Mayor of York in the time of Henry VIII.*

*The leading traits of his own character are his reliability, his courage and his piety which is on the verge of fanaticism. To quote Father Tesimond again—who was educated at the same school as Fawkes, though senior to him and who knew him in the days of the Plot—he was " a man of great piety, of exemplary temperance, of mild and cheerful demeanour, an enemy of broils and disputes, a faithful friend and remarkable for his punctual attendance upon religious observances."*

LORD MONTEAGLE, *cousin to Catesby and Winter, is thirty—a heavy man, dressed in blacks and browns, with a large beard and heavy-lidded, rather protuberant eyes. As a Member of the House of Lords, Lord Lieutenant of Lancashire and Councillor to the King, he is a person of importance. He has been one with Catesby and his friends in their plots and rebellions and three years ago almost lost his life for his share with them in Essex's rebellion at the end of Elizabeth's reign. But in this new reign—which at the time of the Plot is two years old—he has made terms with the Government. His lands have been restored to him; he has renounced his Catholicism and become, at least in name, a Protestant. His cousins, however, still believe he is one of them, double-crossing the Government.*

*A man of no principles and very little ability, he has a certain " smooth " charm and is interested in the outward trappings of power. At his first appearance—and, indeed, whenever he is with his cousins—there should be no suggestion that he is not whole-heartedly with them and the audience should understand how completely he takes them in.*

ROBERT CECIL, EARL OF SALISBURY, *though in the play a minor character, must be played with such power that his influence is felt all the time after his first appearance. He is one of the most unpleasant characters in English history.*

*Virtually the ruler of England, he is a dwarf and a hunchback, splay-footed, prematurely old—he is now forty-two; he was grey at thirty—with a passion for jewels and an abhorrence of wine. "He had inexhaustible patience, an unruffled temper, quiet self-control and matchless dissimulation. . . . From an early age, he was master of the science of using and directing for his own ends men's weakness and venality and ambition. He mastered, perhaps better than any other English statesman, the meaning of political power, knew every* nuance *of it—when a mere promise would secure service or when an appointment to office was safer; when a payment of money was a good investment; when merely a long imprisonment would break a man, or when an appearance of good-will and understanding and kindly treatment might serve to throw him off his guard, or when torture was the quickest and most efficacious method. Machiavelli could have taught him little and with the theoretical mastery went ability in practice. He was economical of energy, never used a threat where a word would do, never resorted to hard measures if he could succeed with soft, never flattered too fulsomely, killed too many or paid too much. . . . His dissimulation in high matters formed a habit that determined even his personal relations and, according to the French Minister, his falsehood had become so second nature that he was unable to speak the truth even to his friends. It may be doubted, however, whether he had any friends. His was not a nature to hold or require them and perhaps his most revealing characteristic was the loneliness which made him turn for what relaxation he allowed himself to books rather than to men. . . . Cecil's one principle—the continuance of his own power—could be understood only in terms of the destruction of Catholicism and to this end the "proud and terrible dwarf" quietly directed all his not inconsiderable ability."*

FATHER HENRY GARNET, S.J., *the head of the Jesuit Mission to England, is fifty-one. He is a Derbyshire man, educated at Winchester and in his youth a Corrector to the*

*Press. At his trial, the Lord Chief Justice (who knew him) referred to him as "by birth a gentleman, by education a scholar" with "many gifts and endowments of nature, by art learned, a good linguist". Abroad he had studied under Bellarmine; at the English College at Rome, he was not only Professor of Hebrew but deputised for two years for the famous mathematician, Clavius. Everyone bore witness to the charm of his character and the depth of his devotion. The only doubt was of the strength of his personality and, at first, the General of the Jesuits hesitated to entrust him with the Mission to England on the grounds that it was "exposing the meekest lamb to the cruellest butchery". "The cruellest butchery" was to come at last, but before it, Garnet was to rule the English Province for eighteen years and, in spite of persecution at its most virulent and of the Government spy-service, to leave behind him a good organization and forty Jesuits where he found, on his arrival, only one Jesuit and that one in prison.*

*Garnet, of course—since for a Jesuit to be discovered in England meant death for high treason—used many disguises and many aliases; and when we first see him, he is in ordinary dress, posing as a country gentleman. Yet, if the actor can accomplish it, something of certitude and authority —quite different in its nature from the soldierliness of Fawkes, the inherent leadership of Catesby or the assurance of Monteagle—should come through.*

FATHER OSWALD TESIMOND, S.J., *is forty-two. He is one of the few people of whom we have an exact description, taken from the proclamation for his arrest: "Of a reasonable stature, black hair, a brown beard cut close on his cheeks and left broad on the chin, somewhat long-visaged, lean in the face, but of a good red complexion, his nose somewhat long and sharp at the end, his hands slender and long fingers, his body slender, his legs of a good proportion, his feet somewhat long and slender. His apparel of cloth, hose and jerkin much after the Italian fashion, the jerkin buttoned on the breast, his cloak buttoned down before with ribands hanging down*

*on his breast, his hat narrow-brimmed with a small band and a broad full crown, as now the fashion is."*

*It is a side-light on Tesimond's character that, as he was reading this proclamation, a man in the crowd noticed his resemblance to it and asked him to accompany him to the magistrate. Tesimond assured him that he had made a mistake, but let himself be led quietly away until, when they came to a quiet street, he knocked his captor out and made his escape, finally reaching France in the character of the owner of a cargo of dead pigs.*

*Tesimond himself admitted that he was of a choleric rather than a phlegmatic disposition and he is altogether more warlike than his Superior, Garnet. He is a Yorkshireman—educated, it will be remembered, at the same school (the Royal Grammar School of Philip and Mary at York) as Guy Fawkes, who is seven years his junior. He has been a professor in philosophy in two Italian colleges; he is a devoted priest who can write " I can only relate of the eight years I stayed in England what befalls all those who work in that vineyard: that is, fatiguing journeys on foot, sufferings of every kind and, above all, the frequent and almost daily perils of falling into the hands of our enemies, who are extremely vigilant and employ every means to take the priests "; but he retains all the qualities of a Yorkshireman of action.*

LADY CATESBY, *Robert Catesby's mother, is about sixty, a woman of charm and intelligence and of a rock-like strength of will and character. This part must be played by a mature and experienced actress, as, though it is comparatively short, the balance of the play largely depends on it.*

ELIZABETH ROOKWOOD, *Ambrose Rookwood's wife, is twenty-three. Although at moments of crisis she is as strong as Lady Catesby, she shows—when her husband is not in the company—an anxiety for him, which suggests both a young girl very much in love and a wife dreading an outside danger which she instinctively senses.*

# THE SCENES

*Besides Prologue and Epilogue, there are six scenes, played alternately in a room in the Catesby manor house in the Midlands and in a room in Cecil's new house overlooking the Strand in London.*

*In the room in Lady Catesby's house at Ashby, the large window looking out into a garden full of autumn colour, faces the audience. On either side there is heavy panelling—that on the left-hand side with a sufficiently solid backing at points for it to be "sounded" satisfactorily by pursuivants searching the house; that on the right capable of being "opened" to reveal a small, "priest's-hole" chapel.*

*The fire-place is on the left-hand wall. Beyond it is the door used for communication with the outside world. On the opposite wall a similar door leads to the rest of the house and below it is Lady Catesby's bureau.*

*In the centre of the room is a small table at which four of the men can play cards.*

*These are the essentials of the scene, which can be additionally decorated—or modified—as the producer pleases.*

*In Cecil's house, there is a large window to the side, capable of being opened; a small table—or desk—and two chairs. It could be a small drop-set inside the other; but, however contrived, it must be capable of being quickly set in order to avoid a wait.*

# THE ACTION

*takes place in the two houses in the October and November of* 1605.

PROLOGUE *Cecil's House, March,* 1604

## ACT ONE

SCENE 1 *Lady Catesby's House, October,* 1605

SCENE 2 *Cecil's House, two days later, at* 2 *a.m.*

SCENE 3 *Lady Catesby's House, a fortnight later*

## ACT TWO

SCENE 1 *Lady Catesby's House, ten days later*

SCENE 2 *Cecil's House, November* 5*th, at* 4 *a.m.*

SCENE 3 *Lady Catesby's House, four days later*

EPILOGUE *Cecil's House, January* 31*st,* 1606

# PROLOGUE

*The study in Cecil's house in the Strand in March* 1604. *At this point the room is not yet fully furnished. There is no desk, as there is in the later scenes; only two or three chairs. As the curtain goes up, Cecil and Monteagle enter, Cecil with his arm through Monteagle's. In his hand is a letter.*

CECIL: And this is the room, my dear Monteagle, I shall use as my study. Not for a week or two. The builders are still about and naturally things are in rather a turmoil. But soon.

MONTEAGLE: You'll find it noisy, my lord, overlooking the Strand, won't you? I have my private rooms at the back. The garden and the river make a delightful prospect.

CECIL: (*at window*) I have to leave those moments, unfortunately, for the times when I can escape to Theobalds. Here, in London, the ear must be close to the ground. (*He opens the window and we hear street sounds and chatter*). The chatter of the street is less tuneful than the song of birds, but it is often more rewarding.

MONTEAGLE: That is the penalty of being the King's Secretary.

CECIL: Penalty? Privilege, my lord.

MONTEAGLE: Of course, yes. Privilege.

[*Cecil shuts the window and turns back to him. There is a slight change of tone.*]

CECIL: And one of my privileges is to be able to serve you.

MONTEAGLE: I am hardly worthy of that.

CECIL : That was my opinion, too, until the King convinced me otherwise. This letter——

MONTEAGLE : But I did not write to you, my lord.

CECIL : No. You wrote, naturally, to the King. But it came to me.

MONTEAGLE : Yes, of course, the King would——

CECIL : The King has not yet seen it.

MONTEAGLE : But surely His Majesty——

CECIL : At this time we have to prevent him from being overwhelmed with requests. As it is, he is crushed under the weight of the Kingdom's business. Though I am sure that your letter is of sufficient importance to claim his attention—when he reads it. Shall we sit down ?

[*They do so, Cecil business-like ; Monteagle punctiliously polite.*]

CECIL : Now you say that you wish to change your religion, to become a Protestant.

MONTEAGLE : Yes, I explained to His Majesty that, though I was in good faith in the religion I was brought up in, I have now become convinced that I was in error. I have read all I could. I have talked with learned men, both Catholic and Protestant . . .

CECIL : And you are now certain that we Protestants have the truth.

MONTEAGLE : Yes, you see, my lord, when one considers in the first place that——

CECIL : I fear that theology is not a thing I could discuss with advantage to either of us. And you will understand I do not need convincing that we Protestants have the truth. I have never doubted it. When you see His Majesty, you will doubtless have many days of theological discourse. It is one of his pleasures. I am a statesman, and concerned only with practical matters.

MONTEAGLE : But what could be more practical than the saving of one's soul ?

CECIL : Of course. But it is a long time before one can learn whether one's policies in that respect have come to fruition. But in immediate things, my lord, your record is not altogether good.

MONTEAGLE : But that is over.

CECIL : We will hope so. I do not intend to rehearse the past. It would take too long and neither of us forgets it. You and your cousins Catesby and Winter caused us trouble enough in the Essex affair. You paid the Exchequer handsomely for that, I admit.

MONTEAGLE : The fines almost ruined us.

CECIL : They were intended to ; it was only the Queen's mercy that you kept your lives. And then there was that matter of you and Catesby sending Winter to Spain two years ago——

MONTEAGLE : (*agitatedly : entirely off his guard*). You know that ?

CECIL : Of course. It is my duty to know when men plot with England's enemies.

MONTEAGLE : But I can assure you, on my honour, that there was no treason in it. We only wanted to know what the King of Spain's policy would be when Queen Elizabeth died.

CECIL : That is my business rather than yours. Had you come to me I could have told you. It would have saved you the expense of Winter's journey. (*A change of tone ; still suave but an undercurrent of menace*). Lord Monteagle, how can I trust you ?

MONTEAGLE : I will give your lordship any guarantees you ask.

CECIL : What can you give ? Your estate is ruined. You have no place in the House of Lords—yes, yes, I know you are entitled to it. The Earl of Hertford is

instituting a law-suit against you. Your brother is in prison in France, where he will certainly die unless the King himself intercedes for him. (*There is a pause; Monteagle says nothing; Cecil reads from the letter*). You say to the King that, in embracing Protestantism, you are actuated by the—ah, here it is,—" The true service of God and the salvation of my own soul "—as you have just said to me—" not gain, not honour, no, not that which I do most highly value, your Majesty's favour or better opinion of me ". That is well phrased.

MONTEAGLE : It is true, my lord.

CECIL : I am sure it is. Neither I nor the King would doubt it.

MONTEAGLE : And my future conduct will justify your trust. You will find no more loyal subject——

CECIL : Loyalty in these days is a rare pearl of very great price. If you could give that——

MONTEAGLE : But that is the easiest of payments.

CECIL : We shall see. You are a Catholic——

MONTEAGLE : Not now.

CECIL : You have been a Catholic. That means disloyalty.

MONTEAGLE : You wrong us—them. There is no disloyalty among Catholics. They keep their Faith, yes ; but they obey the King.

CECIL : Do they go to their parish churches ?

MONTEAGLE : No, but that is a matter of conscience. That is understood. They pay the fines.

CECIL : Of course you are right, my dear Monteagle. And I am not concerned with conscience. My care is the safety of the State. Like our late dear mistress, Queen Elizabeth, I care not a rap how people worship God so long as they are not traitors to their sovereign. But that is what I am not certain of. I believe the Catholics are planning an insurrection.

MONTEAGLE : No. That is a most monstrous . . . That is quite false, I know. You believe me ?

CECIL : I believe that you believe it not to be so. But you may not have been told.

MONTEAGLE : I can assure your lordship that, were it so, I should know.

CECIL : You mean your cousins would tell you ? Catesby and Winter ?

MONTEAGLE : They have no such intention. They are as peaceable as I.

CECIL : What would you stake on it ?

MONTEAGLE : You have reminded me I have nothing to stake.

CECIL : We might make a test which would save everything.

MONTEAGLE : Everything ?

CECIL : The safety of the State, the reputation of the Catholics, your favour with His Majesty—and, of course, your soul . . . Would you play the Devil for me, my lord ?

MONTEAGLE : I admit I cannot follow your lordship's meaning, but I can do nothing to imperil my honour. If there is an honourable way to play the Devil—

CECIL : I should never suggest to you a dishonourable course. And I was thinking of the Devil—may he be far from us !—as the Tempter. To make sure that Catesby is as loyal as you say he is, could you not tempt him to be otherwise ?

MONTEAGLE : Even if I could it would make no difference.

CECIL : But that you cannot say until you have tried. Goodness must be tested, surely . . . You are acquainted with the Book of Job ? If you do not know it, you will learn when you become a Protestant. We study our Bibles.

MONTEAGLE : I am not ignorant of it.

CECIL : Then you realise that the Devil merely vindicated Job—as you will no doubt vindicate your cousins.

MONTEAGLE : But how—

CECIL : The details can be settled later. We must give careful thought to that. But with the principle, I take it, you agree ?

MONTEAGLE : They will come to no harm ?

CECIL : Not unless they bring it upon themselves. How could they ?

MONTEAGLE : No, no . . . of course not.

CECIL : And if by any chance you over-estimate their loyalty, you as a loyal Protestant would not wish them to escape the punishment—for treason.

MONTEAGLE : That is not to be thought of.

CECIL : Not for an instant. Then we are agreed ? I am sure the King will look most favourably on your requests. And now, my dear Monteagle, let me presume upon our friendship and weary you by showing you the rest of my house.

*He links his arm again with Monteagle's and they go out as*

*The Curtain Falls*

# ACT ONE

## *Scene* I

*When the curtain goes up the stage is empty. Lady Catesby and Mrs Rookwood enter by the door leading to the rest of the house.*

MRS ROOKWOOD : How many more panels have you to do ?

LADY CATESBY : Only two. (*She takes up her embroidery which is lying on the armchair by the fireplace.*) When this one's finished. You see there's not very much left. This corner—I'm going to put the family lion there. Under the tree.

MRS ROOKWOOD : What exquisite work, Lady Catesby. (*Examining it.*) You've used more stitches than I should have patience for.

LADY CATESBY : I'll confess, Elizabeth, that at the beginning I didn't mean to. It was to be just the ordinary tent stitch in two sizes. Then I couldn't resist that (*pointing to part of the design*) in coral stitch——

MRS ROOKWOOD (*pointing to another*) : And that in buttonhole——

LADY CATESBY : Yes. And the gold and silver thread——

MRS ROOKWOOD : It was worth the trouble.

LADY CATESBY : I'm glad you think so. But I doubt whether Robin will notice it.

MRS ROOKWOOD : It's for him ?

LADY CATESBY : Everything will be his. There's no one else. You have two children ?

MRS ROOKWOOD : Yes.

LADY CATESBY : How old are they now ?

MRS ROOKWOOD : The boy's two and a half and the girl nearly a year. She's the image of Ambrose. And in April——

LADY CATESBY : I'm so glad. Which do you want it to be ?

MRS ROOKWOOD : A girl, I think. These times are too cruel for men. It's like an endless war. I try not to let Ambrose see my fears, but——

LADY CATESBY : I know. In these days we're the wives and mothers of soldiers. And they're wild ones—your husband and my son.

MRS ROOKWOOD : Ambrose would do anything for Robin. He's like the elder brother he never had. Had you realised that ? He almost worships him. I'm glad. It's good for him. But, Lady Catesby, I don't want him to go to the Flanders wars with him. D'you understand ? It may be right to fight for the Faith there ; but we can fight in our own way, quietly, with patience, here, can't we ? And I feel that Ambrose——

LADY CATESBY : Of course. I'll see Robin doesn't take him. His place is here with you and the children.

MRS ROOKWOOD : Thank you.

LADY CATESBY : And now, if Father Garnet and Father Tesimond are hearing confessions before they go, I'd better open the chapel.

MRS ROOKWOOD : Where is your chapel ?

LADY CATESBY (*going over and pressing the secret spring of the panel which flies back and reveals a tiny chapel*) : Here. Yours at Coldham Hall is larger than this I've been told.

MRS ROOKWOOD : A little, perhaps. But not so cunningly contrived. Though isn't it dangerous having it here ? Ours at Coldham is in a deserted wing.

LADY CATESBY : We have one at the other end of the house, too. I use it as an oratory. It was Robin's idea to put one here. He says that searchers always overlook the obvious.

[*Catesby and Rookwood enter. Rookwood goes straight over to his wife. Catesby looks at the chapel.*]

CATESBY : Thank you, Mother. I was just going to do that. The Jesuits must go on at once. As soon as it's dark ; so the sooner they're ready, the better.

LADY CATESBY : Where are they ?

CATESBY : We left them in the orchard. They obviously wanted to say something to each other. You'd agree with that, Ambrose, wouldn't you ?

ROOKWOOD : Yes, Robin. Your tact was perfect. You should have been a diplomat.

CATESBY (*with a short laugh*) : A diplomat ? Never. I leave that to Tom Winter. I should never have the patience. Should I, Mother ?

LADY CATESBY : I'm afraid not.

MRS ROOKWOOD : You could at least show a little towards your mother and admire her embroidery.

CATESBY : Yes, she's good at it. (*Crossing to her and looking at it casually.*) Yes, that's very good. What are you going to put in there ? Me?

LADY CATESBY : More or less. The Catesby lion.

CATESBY : Under an apple tree ? That doesn't make sense.

LADY CATESBY : No, but it makes a very good pattern.

CATESBY : So long as you don't repeat the mistake of the Bosworth panel.

LADY CATESBY : That was not necessary, Robin. (*To the others.*) He's rallying me.

ROOKWOOD : May we know ?

LADY CATESBY : It was one of the early panels. About the famous Catesby who was Richard III's friend. He should have been offering the King a horse at Bos worth——

CATESBY (*acting both parts*) : " A horse ! A horse ! My kingdom for a horse ! "

"Withdraw, my lord! I'll help you to a horse!"

It ought to have been you, Ambrose.

ROOKWOOD: What are you quoting?

CATESBY: A play about Richard III. By William Shakespeare. He's a distant connection of ours, but we don't say much about having an actor in the family. It's very distant. I went to the play to see my ancestor on the stage. The actor should have been punished.

MRS ROOKWOOD: But what's this to do with the panel?

LADY CATESBY: Nothing really. Only that Catesby fled from the battle. That's why it was unfortunate that I put him on a horse, instead of offering his horse to the King.

CATESBY: They caught and killed him, all the same. He paid for loyalty. (*Quoting again, but with a difference in emotion.*)

"'Tis a vile thing to die, my gracious lord,
When men are unprepared and look not for it."

That's another thing Catesby says in the play.

MRS ROOKWOOD: You would have made an actor, Robin.

CATESBY: As well as a diplomat? Though perhaps they need the same gifts. . . . (*Again a harsh laugh.*) Plays! Faugh!

ROOKWOOD: I enjoy them when they're good.

LADY CATESBY: Robin's thinking of——

CATESBY (*interrupting*): No, Mother. That doesn't hurt me now. (*To Rookwood.*) It was before the Essex affair. Monteagle and I went over to the Globe to get them to play the deposition of Richard II. That was by Shakespeare, too. Timid little man was almost crazy with fear of what would happen to the

actors if they did. They did it. It was a Saturday afternoon. Nothing happened to them. But it cost us a fortune. One makes mistakes in youth.

[*Garnet and Tesimond come in by the garden entrance. Lady Catesby and Mrs Rookwood both rise.*]

LADY CATESBY : The chapel is ready, Father.
GARNET : Thank you.
LADY CATESBY : Would you like to see the servants first or shall we——
GARNET : As you like. There is plenty of time.
CATESBY : No, Father. Enough, but not plenty. (*To Tesimond.*) *You* agree that you should go on as soon as possible ?
TESIMOND : It is for Father Garnet to decide, not for me.
GARNET : It would be good if we could stay the night and say our mass here in the morning. The relief to be here, quietly, is something that——
CATESBY : Father, we all wish you could stay with us, but you *must* go as soon as it's dark. Or even twilight. We cannot promise you safety. I am ashamed that it should be so, but it is. And the responsibility is too great.

[*Catesby's young servant, Dick, knocks on the outer door and enters at once.*]

DICK : My lady, the pursuivants have just come.
CATESBY : That's what I feared. Quickly. Where are they, Dick ?
DICK : With Master Bates, sir. He'll keep them as long as he can.
CATESBY : I know. Go and tell—— No. Stay here and help us. The table——
GARNET (*with Tesimond at the chapel door*) : Shall we stay in here ?

CATESBY : No. It's safer in the open. Cards. We'll play primero. Cards. Counters. Quickly.

[*Lady Catesby closes the chapel door and goes over to the fireplace chair where she sits doing her embroidery. Mrs Rookwood sits opposite her with a book. Meanwhile the men, helped by Dick, set the table in the centre of the stage, with four chairs round it, and sit down to play cards. Dick then goes to the outer door, saying as he passes Lady Catesby :*]

DICK : What shall I say, my lady, when they come ?
LADY CATESBY : Show them in.

[*Dick goes off. On the stage is a state of extreme tension. In a moment we hear :*]

DICK (*off*) : Her ladyship will receive you.
FIRST PURSUIVANT (*off*) : I know that well enough, you young puppy.

[*He enters, followed by the second Pursuivant, pushing Dick out of the way.*]

Out of my way !
LADY CATESBY : What do you want this time ?
FIRST PURSUIVANT : We've called to collect the fines.
CATESBY : My steward has the money as usual. Haven't you seen him ?
SECOND PURSUIVANT : We've seen Master Bates.
FIRST PURSUIVANT (*jingling a bag of coin*) : Yes, the money's here. But we heard you'd some guests here, too.
LADY CATESBY : No one, I think, you don't know from previous visits. Master Ambrose Rookwood and his wife ; Master Whalley, who looks after my most important business (*indicating Garnet*) and Master Beaumont (*indicating Tesimond*) who deals

in rare stuffs and has come to value some of my treasures.

FIRST PURSUIVANT: Why?

CATESBY: Why? How do you suppose we can pay the fines?

SECOND PURSUIVANT: Master Catesby's had to sell two of his estates already.

FIRST PURSUIVANT: Well, the remedy's in his own hands. He's only got to obey the law and go to church like the rest of us.

CATESBY: I'd rather——

LADY CATESBY: I think you know that, for us Papists, that would be a grave sin. You must do what you must; leave us to do what we must.

FIRST PURSUIVANT: As long as you can pay for it. While we're here, Peter, we may as well go over the room again.

SECOND PURSUIVANT: Yes, sir.

[*The Second Pursuivant starts tapping the wainscot, the First goes over to the bureau, scattering the papers.*]

LADY CATESBY: You've been over it so often, that I should have thought it was waste of your time.

FIRST PURSUIVANT: That's for us to decide.

LADY CATESBY: Of course.

[*The Pursuivants continue to search the room.*]

CATESBY: Yours, Ambrose. We're waiting.

ROOKWOOD: Be patient with the novice.

GARNET: Provided your mind's on the game.

ROOKWOOD: It's difficult. . . . Spades.

TESIMOND: Are you sure? My hand——

GARNET: Let him learn.

CATESBY: Are you taking in?

ROOKWOOD: Three. (*He takes three extra cards.*) And you, Robin?

CATESBY : No, I stand

GARNET : Two. (*Rookwood deals him two.*)

TESIMOND : One. (*Rookwood deals him one.*)

[*They play.*]

FIRST PURSUIVANT : There's nothing here.

CATESBY : You'd hardly expect to find anyone hidden in a bureau, would you ?

[*They laugh.*]

FIRST PURSUIVANT : You'll laugh on the other side of your face, Master Catesby, before we've finished with you.

CATESBY (*suddenly rising and putting his hand to his sword*) : Or perhaps I shall cease to laugh.

LADY CATESBY : Sit down, Robin, and go on with your game. The pursuivants are only doing their duty. In *my* house.

CATESBY : Yes, Mother.

GARNET : Your play, Catesby.

[*The younger Pursuivant has got near the chapel panel. Lady Catesby speaks directly to him.*]

LADY CATESBY : Have you any special reason for this search ?

SECOND PURSUIVANT (*turning to her*) : Well, my lady——

FIRST PURSUIVANT (*interrupting*) : The Sheriff's had news that there are two Jesuits in the neighbourhood and that you may be hiding them.

CATESBY : Now you can tell him the rumour was wrong.

LADY CATESBY : There's no one here you haven't seen. I'll give you my word for that.

FIRST PURSUIVANT : As if I'd take a Papist's word !

SECOND PURSUIVANT : My lady, you've known me

since I was a boy here. You know I'd not willingly do what I have to do ; but what with one thing and another and times as they are——

LADY CATESBY : I know, Peter. I'm not blaming you. But it seems so foolish to go on. And you've seen all the servants, haven't you ?

FIRST PURSUIVANT : We've seen 'em.

SECOND PURSUIVANT : And I can vouch for them. You know that, sir. I've grown up with them.

GARNET : I'll see your hand, Catesby.

CATESBY : You're unwise, Master Whalley. See, I have the matadors.

FIRST PURSUIVANT : You play a traitorous Spanish game, too.

GARNET : I learnt to play this game when Philip of Spain was King of England. It was fashionable then.

SECOND PURSUIVANT (*coming to the table*) : What are the matadors, sir ?

CATESBY : The killing cards, Peter. The Spadillo—that's the ace of spades ; the Mallillio—black deuce ; and Basto—ace of clubs. They kill all the rest.

ROOKWOOD : That means we all pay him three large counters.

FIRST PURSUIVANT : Come on, Peter. We'll get more than that when we do our killing. And harbouring Jesuits is a killing matter. We'll find 'em if they're here.

GARNET : If they were here, they couldn't escape you, could they ?

SECOND PURSUIVANT : They'd not get far.

FIRST PURSUIVANT : I promise you that——

[*They are now obviously about to go.*]

LADY CATESBY : Robin, will you see our guests on their way ?

FIRST PURSUIVANT : We'll be back to-morrow ; and

we'll find those Jesuits, if we have to burn the house to smoke them out of their hole.

[*The First Pursuivant has taken a small silver ornament standing on the bureau. Catesby holds out his hand for it : the Pursuivant insolently puts it in his pocket.*]

CATESBY : A thief, too !

FIRST PURSUIVANT : What a thing to say, Master Catesby. Your mother would like me to have it as some return for all the trouble we've been to.

LADY CATESBY : Let him have it, Robin.

FIRST PURSUIVANT : Thank you, Lady Catesby. It'll look well in my little room, to remind me of your grand house.

[*Catesby and the Pursuivants go out. For a strained moment or two the three men go on playing ; Lady Catesby embroidering, Mrs Rookwood reading, as if they were afraid the Pursuivants were listening at the door. Then Mrs Rookwood gets up, goes over to the door and opens it to see.*]

MRS ROOKWOOD : They've gone.

[*As she comes back, Rookwood rises and takes her in his arms.*]

ROOKWOOD : Bess, I was frightened for you.

MRS ROOKWOOD : You need never be, sweetheart.

ROOKWOOD : It's infamous—infamous.

LADY CATESBY : I think it's worse for you young people. We're almost used to it by now. One even begins to learn patience.

ROOKWOOD : Patience. Patience—while they harry us and rob us : while they hunt us down like foxes : patience while they torture and kill our priests——

GARNET : Yes, Master Rookwood, " let us run with patience the race that is set before us, enduring the Cross, despising the shame ".

LADY CATESBY : We try to, Father.

[*The sound of someone at the door makes them all resume their positions immediately : but Catesby alone enters.*]

CATESBY : It's safe now. They've gone and I've told Bates to see our people are posted round the house for the next two hours anyhow. You realise now, Father, that you must go.
GARNET : Yes, I do.
CATESBY : You can go on to Huddington with Tom Winter. He should be here any minute.
TESIMOND : Then we'd best waste no time now.
ROOKWOOD : Let's put the cards away.
TESIMOND : Don't disturb the counters.
ROOKWOOD : But we're not playing any more, are we ?
TESIMOND : Not playing. Paying. You pay.
GARNET : To me. (*Looks at the stakes.*) You owe me three crowns and (*to Catesby*) you five.
CATESBY (*throwing down the money*) : Make it ten Father, for good measure.
ROOKWOOD : And mine twenty. . . . Is this the rule, Robin ?
CATESBY : Yes, when we have to play, the losers give alms. It means food to many poor Catholics. And, for yourselves, you say a Hail, Mary for each large counter and an Our Father for the small.

[*Catesby opens the chapel, goes in and brings out a statue of Our Lady which he puts on the bureau in place of the ornament the pursuivant took.*]

CATESBY : There, Mother.
LADY CATESBY : That was a good thought, Robin.

[*Rookwood and Tesimond move the table and put away the cards. Tesimond then goes out unobtrusively.*]

(*To Mrs Rookwood.*) You'd no doubt like to be quiet awhile in your own room.

MRS ROOKWOOD : Yes.

LADY CATESBY : I too. . . . (*To Garnet.*) We shall not be long, Father.

[*They go off. Catesby, still busy in and out of the chapel, speaks to Rookwood over his shoulder.*]

CATESBY : Ambrose.

ROOKWOOD : Yes, Robin.

CATESBY : Will you do something for me ?

ROOKWOOD : Anything I can. Anything in the world. You know.

CATESBY : Go down to the gate and watch for Tom Winter. Or ride toward the London road. He'll have a friend with him.

GARNET : Are you afraid they're in trouble ?

CATESBY : No, Father. Tom can deal with trouble. But he is very late and he should know he must hurry if he's to take you and Father Tesimond on with him.

ROOKWOOD : I'll speed him.

[*Rookwood goes out.*]

CATESBY : He's still a boy. He welcomes any excuse to ride one of his famous horses. You know, Father, his stable's the best in England ?

GARNET : I'd heard it, yes.

CATESBY : I'm trying to get him to let me have some to take to Flanders with me.

GARNET : To Flanders ?

CATESBY : Yes.

GARNET : You're going to Flanders ?

CATESBY : Yes. I thought you'd have known. I'm raising an English troop of horse for the Archduke's army. Three hundred. We're crossing with Charles

Percy. I'm to be his Lieutenant-Colonel.

GARNET: When?

CATESBY: As soon as I can raise the troop and our appointments are confirmed. Father, it'll be good to fight again. I was not born for patience.

GARNET: I know that. Perhaps Flanders *is* where you are called.

CATESBY: The issue's simple there, at least. All but in one thing. May I have your mind on that, Father?

GARNET: Of course. What is the problem?

CATESBY: Killing the innocent.

GARNET: Killing the innocent?

CATESBY: In war. Is it lawful to blow up a fortress? What is the voice of Holy Church? Is it right to destroy a town?

GARNET: Surely you know that answer. If the war itself is just, necessary actions in it are also just.

CATESBY: There are some who question both right and necessity in such matters.

GARNET: That is foolishness. The common doctrine of all divines concedes the right of a commonwealth to defend itself: if it doesn't it has failed in its duty to the people. As a private person may repel force so may a commonwealth.

CATESBY: All admit that, Father, nor do I question that such has been the rule of all well-governed commonwealths however pious and devout their rulers. Yet, in the Low Countries war, there are certain actions which are not so simple.

GARNET: For example?

CATESBY: Suppose the capture of certain leaders of the enemy were the object of the action.

GARNET: That is a necessary and just object; for their capture might bring the war to an end.

CATESBY : But, let us say, these men have taken refuge in a town or fortress which would have to be destroyed in order to take them. In the course of it, many innocent would suffer. How then can those who have the right to make the war justify the destruction of the town and fort in which many innocents and young children—some perhaps unchristened—will perish ?

GARNET : This is indeed a problem of the gravest difficulty.

CATESBY : So it seems to me. How do we escape the accusation of murder ?

GARNET : We ?

CATESBY : It might fall to me and my troop.

GARNET : First, it can never be right to kill the innocent. Indeed, considering the matter by itself, it is never right to put any man to death, even a criminal. The considerations which govern an execution rest on other grounds—the relation of the personal good to the general good. But as the life of the innocent and godly helps the common good, it can never be lawful to kill or destroy an innocent.

CATESBY : But it's done as a matter of course in the cases I'm talking about.

GARNET : That is true. It is permitted there because it cannot be avoided. But there is *no intention* to touch the innocent. Their destruction is by accident.

CATESBY : Certainly, the intention is only to capture or destroy the leaders who are hiding among the innocent. Therefore the action, Father, is just ?

GARNET : If the cause is just, yes. Indeed we read in Holy Writ of the vengeance which fell on the cities of Benjamin for the crimes committed by a few in Gibeah, " wherein many were destroyed that had not offended ".

CATESBY : Thank you, Father, that sets my mind at ease.
GARNET : Yet I pray you will not be faced with so terrible a choice.
CATESBY : In warfare, Father, who can tell ?

[*Father Tesimond returns in cassock.*]

GARNET : Let Father Tesimond shrive you. I must go and habit myself more seemly, as he has.

[*Tesimond motions Catesby into the chapel ; they go in and a screen is placed across the entrance. Garnet goes out. This takes place in silence ; in a moment we hear the faint murmuring of Tesimond's voice : then Catesby's, but no words are distinguishable. Lady Catesby and Mrs Rookwood return.*]

MRS ROOKWOOD : Ambrose's gone.
LADY CATESBY : You mustn't be anxious : he's safe enough : probably in there.
MRS ROOKWOOD : I'm not anxious. I just thought he'd be here : I thought I heard his voice.

[*We hear Rookwood's voice off saying : " I know he'll be relieved when he sees you all."*]

LADY CATESBY : You did. That's him, surely.
MRS ROOKWOOD : Yes, there he is.

[*Rookwood enters with Monteagle, Winter and Fawkes from the outer door.*]

ROOKWOOD : I've found the laggards, Lady Catesby.

[*Greetings are exchanged. In the bearing of the characters it should be remembered that though Monteagle is the youngest his rank makes him the most important ; that Winter, who serves as his secretary, is also his cousin ; that Lady*

*Catesby is related to both ; and that Fawkes is quite outside this family circle.*]

WINTER : We took our time, Aunt. We had no idea that things were urgent.

LADY CATESBY : The pursuivants were here again ; and for safety——

WINTER : Yes, Ambrose told me.

LADY CATESBY : Lord Monteagle, have you met Mrs Rookwood ?

MONTEAGLE : We're old friends. Practically neighbours. I tell Ambrose he doesn't know how fortunate he is—and I forget even to envy him his horses.

[*Monteagle and Winter talk together.*]

WINTER (*to the ladies*) : But you haven't met Master Guy Fawkes. He's just come from Flanders.

LADY CATESBY : You are welcome to such hospitality as we can offer, Master Fawkes.

FAWKES : Thank you, Lady Catesby, but I'm on my way up to my own people in Yorkshire. It's many years since I saw them.

MRS ROOKWOOD : You've been in the Archduke's army ?

FAWKES : Yes.

WINTER : One of the best soldiers he has. There you say, " As brave as Fawkes ".

MRS ROOKWOOD : You're going back ?

FAWKES : In time, yes. One is free there. Here——

ROOKWOOD : Here the King is set to destroy us. We are pillaged and bled white with fines. We——

WINTER (*quietly*) : They know that in Flanders. Words won't mend it.

MONTEAGLE : And it's not the King so much as little Cecil. That's our enemy. The King's a weak creature who only asks peace to enjoy himself : but that little

hunchback has him in his grip. And he'll pull the strings till puppet-King James dances on the grave of the Faith.

FAWKES: I understood, my Lord, that you had turned Protestant.

MONTEAGLE: As a cover only. (*To the others.*) You don't doubt me?

LADY CATESBY: Of course not, William.

WINTER: He can help us better in that way. Use his influence with Cecil and the King to make things as easy as they can be.

FAWKES: I see. I owe you an apology for my thoughts, my Lord.

MONTEAGLE: In these times we have to use strange shifts—Master Johnson.

ROOKWOOD: Johnson?

FAWKES: It's the name I use in England—John Johnson. For safety. I pass as servant to Thomas Percy.

[*Tesimond and Catesby come out of the chapel.*]

CATESBY: Good, Tom. You're here. And you've brought Fawkes.

[*Monteagle, Winter, Fawkes, bow to Tesimond.*]

TESIMOND: Fawkes? Not *Guy* Fawkes?

FAWKES: Yes, Father.

TESIMOND: Well, who would have thought it? Little Guy of York. (*To the others.*) He doesn't know me.

CATESBY: This is Father Tesimond.

FAWKES: Oswald Tesimond?

TESIMOND: Yes.

[*Fawkes and Tesimond greet each other as two old schoolfellows.*]

TESIMOND : We were at school together at York. And to think that timid little Guy should have turned into this—desperado !

WINTER : Desperado ?

TESIMOND : By his looks.

FAWKES : Certainly, I've seen some campaigning. And to think that Tesimond, the school bully, should have become a priest.

TESIMOND : You are a Catholic ?

WINTER : His devotion puts us all to shame.

FAWKES : You'd left York. It was after my father died.

TESIMOND : Are you going to York now ?

FAWKES : Yes.

TESIMOND : Peaceably ?

FAWKES : Of course.

TESIMOND : Take my love and blessings to all the friends you see.

FAWKES : Yes, Father.

CATESBY : Father, the time is very short. If I may——

TESIMOND : Of course. . . . Ambrose.

ROOKWOOD : Yes, Father.

[*Rookwood and Tesimond go off into the chapel.*]

CATESBY : Mother, wouldn't it be wise if you let Father Garnet have your oratory for his confessions ? Then we need not all wait for the chapel. The sooner they leave, the safer——

LADY CATESBY : Yes, Robin. Come, Elizabeth, we'll go to Father Garnet.

[*Lady Catesby and Mrs Rookwood go off. The attitude of the four men immediately changes.*]

CATESBY : Well ?

WINTER : The powder *was* damp.

FAWKES : We got some more. It's serviceable enough now.
CATESBY : Had anything been disturbed ?
WINTER : No. All the marks were as we left them.
FAWKES : Even the thread on the door.
CATESBY : Then no one can have been in.
FAWKES : No one.
CATESBY : And no one saw you.
FAWKES : Yes, many people. But there's no danger in that. Who would question John Johnson going into his master's cellar ?
WINTER : We brought in the new powder at night.
CATESBY : And the old ?
FAWKES : Still there in another corner.
WINTER : If it dries, it'll make a greater explosion.
CATESBY : You're sure the new won't get damp ?
FAWKES : It may. It depends on the time. And if the river rises.
CATESBY : Monteagle, you're sure it's November the fifth ?
MONTEAGLE : As far as anything's sure, yes.
CATESBY : They've prorogued the opening twice. Why not again ?
MONTEAGLE : I don't think so this time. I spoke to Cecil and the King——
FAWKES : On what excuse, my Lord ?
MONTEAGLE : I don't need an excuse. My office as one of the Commissioners for the Union makes it my duty to know arrangements—and to make them. There is no intention to alter the date of the re-assembly of Parliament from November the fifth.
CATESBY : And the King will be there ?
MONTEAGLE : King, Queen and Prince of Wales.
CATESBY : And Prince Charles ?
MONTEAGLE : I don't know where he'll be. But I'll find out before the fifth. Who'll attend to that ?

CATESBY : Percy and the Wrights. Fawkes will see to the powder. Tom and I will raise London. Grant will command in the Midlands here.

MONTEAGLE : And communications between here and London ?

WINTER : Our servants can take any messages needed.

MONTEAGLE : The King's posts will outride you.

WINTER : Not on that day.

MONTEAGLE : But suppose something goes wrong ?

WINTER : We have guarded against all we can.

CATESBY : No, Tom, he's right. There must be no weak link. . . . Rookwood !

MONTEAGLE : He wouldn't lend his horses to anyone.

CATESBY : Then we must bring him in.

FAWKES : No. No more.

MONTEAGLE : Why not ?

FAWKES : There are enough of us. Each new one is a danger point. In a matter like this, the fewer the better.

WINTER : I agree with Fawkes.

CATESBY : But I give the orders.

WINTER : Yes, Robin, of course.

CATESBY : Rookwood's trustworthy. I think he'd die for me. Much more, then, for the Faith. I'll speak to him.

WINTER : You'll get Percy's consent first ?

CATESBY : How can I ? He's in Northumberland and there's no time. You know it was agreed that, in such circumstances, I could act alone.

WINTER : Yes.

MONTEAGLE : When will you speak to him ?

CATESBY : Now. (*Seeing Fawke's hesitancy he goes charmingly to him.*) Trust me, Guy.

FAWKES : I do.

CATESBY : Tom, you can go next for shriving. And you——

MONTEAGLE: Fawkes and I had best be getting on our way. The less either of us is seen here the better.
FAWKES: Our ways are not the same, my Lord. I go North, you back to London.
MONTEAGLE: But we can ride together as far as the North Road.

[*Catesby goes out with Monteagle and Fawkes. Winter is alone for a moment: then Tesimond and Rookwood come out of the chapel.*]

TESIMOND: You next?
WINTER: Yes, Father. . . . O, Ambrose, Robin wants to speak to you about something. He'll be back in a moment.
ROOKWOOD: I'll wait here.

[*Tesimond and Winter go into the chapel. Rookwood goes over and looks carefully at the little statue of Our Lady on the bureau. He has it in his hands when Catesby comes in.*]

CATESBY: Beautiful, isn't it?
ROOKWOOD: I don't know that I've seen a finer.
CATESBY: It's one of the first things I can remember as a boy. Our family has a special devotion to Our Lady, you know.
ROOKWOOD: We all have that, surely.
CATESBY: No, I mean special. My great-grandfather —they called him "the good Sir William"—was favoured by her with a knowledge of his death. One day he was walking in the fields round here when an angel appeared to him, showed him the anatomy of a dead man and warned him to prepare for death on such a day at such an hour.
ROOKWOOD: I should not have the courage to wish that.
CATESBY: Nor I. But he was glad. He thanked Our Lady; returned home here, settled all his business

toward God and the world ; and made a good death at the time appointed.

ROOKWOOD : I would rather not know. . . . Tom Winter said you had something to say to me.

CATESBY : Yes. . . . But I am not sure. . . .

ROOKWOOD : But, Robin, there are no secrets between us.

CATESBY : There is one.

ROOKWOOD : I assure you——

CATESBY : On my side.

ROOKWOOD : Have I deserved it ?

CATESBY : It is for your good.

ROOKWOOD : Am I a child ?

CATESBY : No, Ambrose : but there are things you need not know.

ROOKWOOD : Is it something that concerns the Faith ?

CATESBY : Why should you think that ?

ROOKWOOD : I know you. What else should you have secrets about ?

CATESBY : What would you risk for the Faith ?

ROOKWOOD : Everything.

CATESBY : You are wrong. You have a wife, children, wealth——

ROOKWOOD : Everything.

[*Catesby takes from his neck a little gold crucifix on a gold chain, and holds it out in his hand to Rookwood :*]

CATESBY : Then swear on this crucifix——

[*Rookwood kneels on one knee, putting his hand on Catesby's.*]

CATESBY : On this crucifix I swear by the Holy Trinity and by the Blessed Sacrament——

ROOKWOOD : On this crucifix I swear by the Holy Trinity and by the Blessed Sacrament——

CATESBY : Never to disclose, directly or indirectly, by word or circumstance——
ROOKWOOD : Never to disclose, directly or indirectly, by word or circumstance——
CATESBY : ——the matter that shall be proposed to me to keep secret——
ROOKWOOD : ——the matter that shall be proposed to me to keep secret——
CATESBY : ——nor desist from the execution thereof until the rest shall give me leave.
ROOKWOOD : ——nor desist from the execution thereof until the rest shall give me leave.

[*Rookwood rises. Catesby puts the crucifix back round his neck.*]

ROOKWOOD : " The rest ", Robin ?
CATESBY : Tom Winter, Fawkes, Grant, Tom Percy and others. You'll meet them all.
ROOKWOOD : And what are you—we—going to do ?
CATESBY : Rule England—and save the Faith.
ROOKWOOD (*laughs*) : We've no power even against the pursuivants : no power even to defend our own houses. How can we " rule England " ?
CATESBY : In three weeks' time, there will be no Royal family . . . no Lords and Commons, no so-called Bishops : no officers of state. They will all die when the Houses of Parliament are destroyed by gunpowder on the fifth of November.
ROOKWOOD : But we——
CATESBY : We shall.
ROOKWOOD : Robin, you're mad.
CATESBY : No. For eighteen months we've perfected it. Fawkes and Tom Winter have just reported that the gunpowder is in perfect condition. We've an armoury at Grants'—for use hereabouts. When the blow falls and London's in confusion, we kidnap

Prince Charles, bring him here, proclaim him King and rule in his name. It may sound mad, but I assure you——

ROOKWOOD: I didn't mean "mad" that way. I meant you must be mad to make yourself a murderer.

CATESBY: Murderer?

ROOKWOOD: Yes, murderer—three hundred murderers in one. All those innocents. It's too horrible.

CATESBY: Innocents? You are mad to call them that. It is they—King, Lords, Commons, judges, Bishops who are the murderers. The blood of our martyrs is on their hands; the misery of our children robbed of their birthright: the slow death of the Faith in this England that once was Our Lady's dowry. And where they made the laws that compassed this infamy, there they shall meet the justice of God.

ROOKWOOD: Or of Catesby? Robin, Robin—think.

CATESBY: Don't you suppose I haven't thought till my brain's blind? Do you suppose I'd stir a finger as Robin Catesby? It's nothing that I have been imprisoned and ruined. For myself, I ask nothing and do nothing. Only for the Faith.

ROOKWOOD: Do the priests know?

CATESBY: No. But Father Garnet approves the principle.

ROOKWOOD: Approves? Of this—horror?

CATESBY: All warfare is horrible. At times, the innocent must suffer that the guilty may be punished.

ROOKWOOD: In warfare, yes, but this——

CATESBY: *Is* war. A crusade. A last sally against great odds. For the Cross. . . . Ambrose, you need have no part in the action that must be done at Westminster. That is for us.

ROOKWOOD: I want no part in it.

CATESBY: All I ask from you is that you help our

messengers. Your horses—the best and swiftest in England—to bring news here of how things go there. That is all. To act as post. That is all. Forget the rest——

ROOKWOOD: I wish I could.

CATESBY: You have sworn.

ROOKWOOD: I did not know what I was swearing. I trusted you.

CATESBY: And can. Ambrose, if we had lived long ago would you have ridden with me to free the Holy Sepulchre from the Turks?

ROOKWOOD: You know I would: but this is not that.

CATESBY: You said you would risk everything for the Faith.

ROOKWOOD: But my salvation. . . . Robin, I have just come from there (*indicating chapel*)—clean. You cannot. . . . Robin, I'll come to Flanders with you.

CATESBY: I'm not going to Flanders.

ROOKWOOD: But the troop you're raising for the Archduke?

CATESBY: That's only a blind. We need them here in the Midlands.

ROOKWOOD: Do they know?

CATESBY: Of course not. I shall tell them after November the fifth.

ROOKWOOD: But what about the Catholics who will be there? Montague, Mordaunt, Stourton, Monteagle——

CATESBY: Monteagle's with us. He won't take his place in the Lords that day.

ROOKWOOD: Will you warn the rest—Mordaunt——

CATESBY: I wouldn't let him into the secret for a room full of diamonds. . . . But he won't be there. He never is when the House reassembles because he objects to sitting alone in his robes while the rest of

them are at the sermon in the Abbey. Montague won't be there either. And Monteagle'll probably see Stourton doesn't go. After all, he's his brother-in-law.

ROOKWOOD: And Arundel? He's . . . he's not twenty-one yet.

CATESBY: No. I don't see how——

ROOKWOOD: But you must——

CATESBY: He must be there because of his rank. If he's not, they might be suspicious. *He* can't send excuses.

ROOKWOOD: Then I excuse myself. I'll be no party to Arundel's murder.

CATESBY: Not murder, Ambrose. His father was a martyr. Do you suppose he'd not give himself willingly if he knew?

ROOKWOOD: Then let him know.

CATESBY: But I can't. No more must know. Don't you understand, Ambrose?

ROOKWOOD: Too well. You must save Arundel at least. By some means.

CATESBY: I'll visit him that morning and see he meets with a slight accident which will prevent him going out for twenty-four hours. . . . Does that satisfy you?

ROOKWOOD: It's not a matter of——

[*They hear someone at the door. Catesby motions caution. They turn to the window, Catesby's arm round Rookwood's shoulder. Lady Catesby and Mrs Rookwood enter.*]

LADY CATESBY: Robin, you look as if you are plotting something.

CATESBY: Do I, Mother? I'm only trying to persuade Ambrose——

LADY CATESBY: To go overseas with you. I guessed

it. Well, you are not to. Ambrose has his duty here in England. You must do as you choose.

CATESBY: I only asked him for some of his horses.

ROOKWOOD: That's true, Lady Catesby.

MRS ROOKWOOD: You can spare one or two, dearest, can't you? They're for the Low Countries, aren't they?

CATESBY: There—or wherever the Faith is best served.

MRS ROOKWOOD: Then I'm sure he will let you have them. If he's obstinate, I'll persuade him.

[*She goes up to him, but he shakes her off and rushes from the room.*]

LADY CATESBY: What have you been doing, Robin?

CATESBY: Only talking about our plans.

MRS ROOKWOOD: I know how on edge Ambrose is, these days. He's taking the persecution so much to heart. To-night, Lady Catesby, though it's your house, he felt it more than if it had been his. (*To Catesby.*) I expect you were talking about that?

CATESBY: Partly.

MRS ROOKWOOD: I'll see that he's all right.

[*She goes out.*]

LADY CATESBY: Robin.

CATESBY: Yes, Mother.

LADY CATESBY: Something is happening that I do not understand.

CATESBY: Why should you think that?

LADY CATESBY: I ask no questions. Only I trust that you won't hurt Ambrose.

CATESBY: Hurt him? Can any of us be hurt any more?

LADY CATESBY: Yes. *They* can. Their hearts are

alive. . . . Perhaps if you still had Catherine and William and your father——

CATESBY: Father. . . . Catherine. . . . William. . . . They're safe. But that was a century ago. I was twenty-six.

LADY CATESBY: Ambrose's age.

CATESBY: Yes. . . . Men could call it a judgment, couldn't they, for a wife and a son and a father all to die in one year. . . . God forgot you.

LADY CATESBY: Perhaps He left me to speak for them now.

CATESBY: How?

LADY CATESBY: To remind you to keep faith with your blood. Your father's loyalty: Catherine's hope: those that come after.

CATESBY: They are beyond knowing.

LADY CATESBY: Then me, Robin. Promise me that you will never do anything that will make me ashamed of you.

CATESBY: I promise you, Mother, that, with God's help, I will never do anything that should.

*Curtain.*

## *Scene 2*

*The room in Cecil's house. It is night. A clock strikes two. Cecil is sitting working at papers on his desk. He rings a bell: a servant enters. Cecil nods at him. He goes out for a moment and then comes back with Monteagle.*

CECIL: You have news for me, Lord Monteagle.

MONTEAGLE: I have, my Lord. The fruit is ripe for plucking.

CECIL : I thought it might be. There's no need for any further delay ?

MONTEAGLE : Assuredly not. It might even be dangerous to delay longer. I assured them that Parliament would meet on November the fifth.

CECIL : It shall. And we can catch them in the act ?

MONTEAGLE : There is no doubt that Fawkes will be there to fire the powder. I met him this time. A fanatic, obviously. He uses, by the way, the name of Johnson and poses as Percy's servant.

CECIL : I know that. He's been watched ever since he landed here.

MONTEAGLE : And the Jesuits, Garnet and Tesimond, are at Catesby's. Though they'll have gone by now, I think.

CECIL : I know that too.

MONTEAGLE : But the house was being searched !

CECIL : The local arrangements in these matters leave much to be desired. It is as well we do not depend on them for our safety. Though in this case their insufficiency is advantageous. I do not wish the Jesuits taken yet.

MONTEAGLE : But surely, my Lord——

CECIL : No. Let us have them all together at a better time—when we can show them to the world as indubitable monsters and murderers.

MONTEAGLE : But are they privy to the plot ?

CECIL : That is one thing I do not know. All I can promise is that no one will believe their innocence of it. Or that of any Catholic. . . . I ask your pardon, my dear Monteagle, if I wound you, but it is difficult for me always to remember you were once a Catholic. Since your conversion you have been such a model of assiduity.

MONTEAGLE : I have tried to do what I promised.

CECIL : And we, on our side, I hope have not failed you.
MONTEAGLE : You have been generosity itself.
CECIL : We Cecils always endeavour to care for our friends.

[*Cecil rises at this point. He puts his hand, bejewelled with rings, on Monteagle's arm. Monteagle stiffens, almost imperceptibly, but enough for Cecil to realise it and tighten his grip.*]

CECIL : And you are my friend.
MONTEAGLE : You honour me.
CECIL : No, when we have brought this plot to light, it is I who will be honoured : —by the friendship of one who will be known as the saviour of his country.
MONTEAGLE (*alarmed*) : But, my Lord, no one must know of my part in this, except yourself. You promised me——
CECIL : Your real service, my dear Lord, will remain a secret between the two of us, but it is unfortunately necessary that your name should become more widely known——
MONTEAGLE : No——
CECIL : I fear so——
MONTEAGLE : But why ? It would mean my death.
CECIL : How could it ?
MONTEAGLE : If Catesby knew I'd betrayed him, nothing could save me.
CECIL : Calm yourself. In the first place, Catesby and the rest will be in no position to harm anyone. In the second place, you will betray—if you insist on using that word—no one. Do not jump to unwarranted conclusions. Sit down.

[*Monteagle sits. Cecil remains standing, dominating him.*]

CECIL : We have nursed this plot for eighteen months since you first put the idea into Catesby's head. There were times when I feared they must suspect us, though fortunately fanatics are usually fools—yet this seemed too plain. Everything has been made easy for them. When they were not ready, I advised the King to prorogue Parliament for six months : when they failed to make a satisfactory mine we made it possible for them to rent the cellar under the House of Lords : when they could not procure enough gunpowder, we arranged for a secret bargain with the storekeeper in the Tower——

MONTEAGLE : They thought God favoured their cause——

CECIL : We may be thankful their false superstitition so blinded them.

MONTEAGLE : But there's no danger now. I have told you. Everything is ready for November the fifth. They'll not draw back.

CECIL : Yes, Lord Monteagle, but suppose they succeed ?

MONTEAGLE : Succeed ?

CECIL : Yes, succeed in blowing us all into eternity.

MONTEAGLE : How can they ? You will give orders for their discovery and arrest the night before. That is the plan, surely ?

CECIL : But on what grounds ?

MONTEAGLE : To prevent it. (*Puzzled.*) I do not follow you, my Lord.

CECIL : Why should we suspect anything ? Why should I suddenly order a search of the coal-cellar in the middle of the night ? Would not that look to the world as if I knew something ?

MONTEAGLE : I begin to see. Yes. It might indeed.

CECIL : And then everything is ruined. Not here. I can stop tongues wagging here. But in Europe ? The

courts of France, Spain, Flanders. The Vatican itself. When we crush the Catholics we must have our answer to them. We are the victims. We must be—innocent, going unsuspectingly to death.

[*Monteagle nods.*]

CECIL: So you have one more service to do.
MONTEAGLE: If it's possible——
CECIL: Three or four days before, you will give a supper party at your house in Hoxton.
MONTEAGLE: I don't use it now. It's closed.
CECIL: There is ample time to have it opened. At the party a letter will be delivered to you by an unknown person. I have it here. (*Taking it from the table.*) It runs: "My Lord, out of the love I bear to some of your friends I have a care of your preservation. Therefore I would advise you to devise some excuse to shift your attendance at this Parliament. Think not slightly of this warning, but retire into the country, for though there be no appearance of any stir, yet I say they shall receive a terrible blow this parliament and yet they shall not see who hurts them".

[*He gives it to Monteagle, who looks puzzled.*]

CECIL: That is good. You will look amazed. You will read it aloud to them all.
MONTEAGLE: Whose writing is this?
CECIL: Excellently done. You do not know the writing——
MONTEAGLE: "A terrible blow and yet they shall not see who hurts them."
CECIL: Yes. A dark phrase. But mischief—grave mischief. Your duty becomes clear. Though it is night you cannot delay in what you must do. . . . What must you do, Lord Monteagle?

MONTEAGLE : Take the letter at once to Mr Secretary Cecil. (*Giving it to him.*)

CECIL : Perfect. What could be more natural, more proper, more innocent? And I shall be puzzled a little too. But for the sake of the State I must solve the riddle and—search for where a blow might be delivered to Parliament. And you, Lord Monteagle, will be acclaimed as saviour of your country and we shall all be your debtors. . . .

[*Monteagle bursts into almost hysterical laughter as Cecil, with an impassive face, strokes his arm.*]

*Curtain.*

## *Scene 3*

*Lady Catesby's house a fortnight later. It is a perfect sunny morning. Winter, as the curtain rises, closes a book and speaks immediately to Lady Catesby who is embroidering.*

WINTER : So you see, Aunt, there are precedents for defending oneself even against a lawfully constituted authority.

LADY CATESBY : They sound quite impressive when you read them, Tom, but all the same I'm not impressed. Once any party tries to take the law into its own hands, there's an end of Law.

WINTER : So a tyrant may crush and pillage his subjects without any resistance? Brutus was wrong to save the republic from Caesar?

LADY CATESBY : As far as I remember my history, he didn't save it. He murdered Caesar and Caesar

heirs continued as tyrants for more than three hundred years. But I'll not argue with you. Your brain can beat mine. It's in my bones I know you're wrong.

WINTER : Then put it like this—when the law of the State and the law of the Church conflict, which do we obey ?

LADY CATESBY : The Church, of course. But there is no conflict here. You know as well as I that the Pope has bidden us be patient.

WINTER : That's because he's not been in England. In Rome, they don't understand. They can't.

LADY CATESBY : Why not ?

WINTER : You've got to experience a thing before you know it. Only a soldier has the right to talk about war. And there in Rome, they're so powerful, so secure, they've forgotten our kind of death.

LADY CATESBY : Then let's be thankful for it, Tom—that the Faith is so safe there.

WINTER : Of course. All I'm trying to say is that, when I was there five years ago for the Jubilee, even I forgot for a little what it was like here. So how can they understand who've never known it ?

LADY CATESBY : Tom, all you need remember is that here we have been born into a time for suffering. Some ages are like that. That is what you and Robin and Ambrose will not see. Perhaps it's a little easier for me. I'm old and when one looks at life from the background of death, things are clearer. Of course, is is hard for us here : but by our courage we shall be judged—and rewarded. " Shall not the judge of the whole earth do right ? " Let us say we're in a nightmare of darkness. But that does not alter the truth we knew in daylight. The King may try to root us out. But if we are loyal, what can he do but give us a martyr's crown ?

WINTER : At least, Aunt, you admit it would be a martyrdom.
LADY CATESBY : What would ?
WINTER : Our death—if that is demanded.
LADY CATESBY : Yes. But this is foolish talk. They will never press things to that extremity. You know that. And as we shall not provoke them, there can be nothing——

[*Catesby comes in.*]

CATESBY : Where's Ambrose ?
LADY CATESBY : In the garden with Bess.
WINTER : Do you want him ?
CATESBY : Not at the moment.
WINTER : When do we leave ?
CATESBY : Sometime this morning. There's no immediate hurry.
LADY CATESBY : Robin, must you go ?
CATESBY : Yes, Mother, I've told you. There are various things in London that no one else can do. Everyone will be up for the opening of Parliament. It's a kind of rendezvous. I shall be back almost at once.
WINTER : And I've got to be there with Monteagle. As his secretary, I'm really more important at these times than he is. On such occasions, you know, he finds his official duties in the House of Lords a little . . . bewildering.
LADY CATESBY : Poor William, he's never been very clever. But as long as he's trustworthy and looks impressive, I don't suppose it matters——
CATESBY : Trustworthy ? Of course he's trustworthy. You don't suppose for a moment that I'd——
LADY CATESBY : Of course, Robin. I didn't mean that——
CATESBY (*almost to himself*) : We've fought together.

We've been in prison together. William's a fool, perhaps, but he's one of the few I'd trust with my life.

LADY CATESBY: You can look after yourselves, whatever you're doing, but do you think it's safe to leave Father Garnet here with all of you gone? Last time you remember, the pursuivants——

CATESBY: Of course. We can't risk that again. He's going over to Coughton to the Digbys'. Bates is taking him. We shall all leave together.

LADY CATESBY: You'd better have dinner first.

CATESBY: I'm not sure that we ought to——

LADY CATESBY: We can have it earlier. I'll go and give the orders.

[*She goes out, meeting at the door Monteagle and Garnet.*]

LADY CATESBY (*to them*): You'll dine before you go, Father?

GARNET: We are in your son's hands, Lady Catesby. If he says so——

CATESBY: There's no hurry for an hour or two.

[*Garnet goes over and talks to Catesby—both of them looking out of the window—while Monteagle talks to Winter—an ordinary conversation with his secretary.*]

MONTEAGLE: Tom, I forgot to tell you. When we get to London I want you to go straight to the Hoxton house.

WINTER: Yes. Why? Do you want me to get something from there?

MONTEAGLE: No. I'm giving a supper-party there to-morrow night.

WINTER: But it's been closed for—it must be a year. We can't get it ready——

MONTEAGLE: Ward'll have seen to it. I told him last

week—— But I'd rather you gave it a last look round to make sure that everthing's in order—you know Ward. . . .

WINTER (*laughing*): Yes. He's certain to forget something. You want me to be in charge?

MONTEAGLE: No, no. He'd resent that. Just your usual discretion, my dear Tom——

WINTER: All right. But why use Hoxton? It's so far out—wouldn't it be better. . . .?

MONTEAGLE: The city'll be so crowded with everyone up for Parliament. If we use the Town house, we shall have dozens of people dropping in uninvited.

WINTER: That's true. We can't be too careful at the moment. You've not asked any of the others?

[*This in a lower voice, so that Garnet cannot overhear.*]

MONTEAGLE: Of course not. It's just an ordinary supper. About fifteen. Ward's got the list. As a matter of fact, I can't remember who they are.

WINTER: It's a good idea.

MONTEAGLE (*smiling*): I thought so.

[*Catesby breaks away from Garnet, vehemently*:]

CATESBY: No, Father, no . . . no. That I will never promise.

GARNET (*referring to a letter he is holding in his hand*): But this is the most absolute prohibition from Rome.

CATESBY: I am not bound to take knowledge by you of the Pope's will, Father. None of us are.

GARNET (*quietly*): You owe me spiritual obedience, my son.

CATESBY: But this is not a spiritual matter, Father.

GARNET: I do not know what it is. I do not ask, for I think none of you would tell me the truth.

WINTER: There is nothing, Father.

GARNET: Nothing? I can smell insurrection in the

air. (*To Catesby.*) Your troop of horse—— (*To Winter.*) Your secret comings and goings—— (*To Monteagle.*) Your talk of the plans of the Court—— This is what I wrote to Rome: "There is no doubt that we can prevent all public taking up of arms, as it is certain that Catholics in general would never attempt anything of the sort. But two things make me very anxious. The first is lest some wild spirits should fly to arms and that then very necessity should compel others. The other is somewhat worse, for the danger is lest secretly some treason or violence be shown to the King (*the other three give quick glances at each other*) and so all Catholics may be compelled to take arms. Wherefore in my judgment, it is necessary that His Holiness should forbid any force of arms to Catholics under censures and by Brief publicly promulgated." Here is the Brief, which has just come.

[*He gives the paper which he earlier showed to Catesby, to Winter and Monteagle, who read it silently together.*]

GARNET: You see, under pain of the gravest censure: if not excommunication itself.

CATESBY: Whatever I mean to do for the good of our country, the Pope would not hinder if he knew.

GARNET: Then write and ask him. If you will not tell me, tell him. I will see that the letter goes with mine to-night—unopened.

CATESBY: Not for the world, Father. Who knows into what hands a letter may fall?

WINTER: The Pope would not condemn a *successful* insurrection which restored England to the Faith.

GARNET: No such insurrection is possible.

WINTER: We could get help from the Low Countries.

GARNET: They would not move a finger. That I know. I have heard from Father Baldwin.

MONTEAGLE (*unnecessarily vehement*): No help from

them? That is a shame indeed. And now, at this moment, when the whole country is sick of the Scots King and dwarf-Cecil—and one little push would——

GARNET (*a change of tone*): My children, I cannot make you obey. God has left us all with our wills free for His hurt and our own. I can only entreat you in charity not to harm what you most love.

CATESBY: We could never——

GARNET (*checking him*): Remember how pride can blind us all. Because you see things as you do, you are certain that that is how they are. You make yourself judges whan you should only be advocates. I am an Englishman like you: I have watched the Faith in this country bleed almost to death; in my heart, perhaps, I am as impatient as you. Yes, I admit it. I could be. Every day I offer all my devotions and masses that God of His mercy will dispose all for the best and ordain some sweeter means for the good of the Faith. And when there seems no answer but a worsening of the terror, patience is hard. You see, I bare my heart to you. But England is only a corner of the battlefield of the world. We must not question the Pope's plan who commands us all. He sees more than we do. He is wiser than we. And now he has spoken with the voice of St. Peter himself, who said: "Be ye subject therefore to every human creature for God's sake: for this is thankworthy, if for conscience towards God, a man endure sorrows, suffering wrongfully, for unto this are you called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving you an example that you should follow his steps, who, when he was reviled, did not revile: when he suffered, he threatened not: but delivered himself to him that judged him unjustly."

[*There is a slight pause: Catesby and Winter are almost uneasy, but Monteagle bursts out:*]

MONTEAGLE : You mean, Father, it is God's will that the noblest Catholic families in England should become lackeys to Cecil.

GARNET : It might be. But we are not called on to sit in judgment on Cecil. He may even be honest in his beliefs. That is God's affair.

MONTEAGLE : But I think we could not be blamed if we made it ours.

[*Catesby and Winter rally to him.*]

CATESBY : Well spoken.

GARNET : Ill spoken. Even if an insurrection succeeded, it would still be wrong. But with no hope of success, you do a double wrong. You give our enemies the chance they want. You make them able to point to us and say : " The Catholics are rebels ; the Catholics are traitors ; the Catholics are a cancer in the body politic which must be cut out if the State is to live."

MONTEAGLE : Cecil says that in any case.

GARNET : Then we must give him the lie.

[*A knock at the door. Catesby goes to it and opens it.*]

SERVANT : Her Ladyship told me, sir, to ask what you would be needing on your journey ? For packing. Is it a long stay——

CATESBY : We'll come and see to it now.

WINTER (*nods*) : Yes, though I think my man knows.

CATESBY : And you, Father ?

GARNET : I have nothing to take but myself, so I will stay here.

[*At " here " he touches the spring and the panel reveals the little chapel. During this, Monteagle, who has nodded in a conspiratorial manner to the other two, goes out with them. Garnet goes into the chapel and is out of sight. In a moment, Rookwood and his wife come in from the garden :*

*he has picked some autumn flowers for her, which she carries : his arm is round her shoulder, protectively.*]

ROOKWOOD : You must do as you think best about that, sweetheart.
MRS ROOKWOOD : But you really think it would be best, too.
ROOKWOOD : The children always need you, of course. Yes. But we've been away as long before. It's not as if they're not well looked after at home. After all, Ann could bring *me* up——
MRS ROOKWOOD (*smiling*) : Yes, darling. . . . I can manage without seeing them for a few more days. I'll come to London with you.
ROOKWOOD : No, Bess. Not to London.
MRS ROOKWOOD : Why not ?
ROOKWOOD : It's impos—— It'd be foolish.
MRS ROOKWOOD : But I thought you said you wanted me with you.
ROOKWOOD : Yes. Always. But not there. Here. I shall only be in London a day or two and busy all the time. Then I shall come straight back here with Robin.
MRS ROOKWOOD : What shall you be busy at ?
ROOKWOOD : Things I've got to get. The tailor. And Craddock's making me a new sword that ought to be ready by now.
MRS ROOKWOOD : A new sword ?
ROOKWOOD : Yes. A crusader's. The hilt's engraved with the Passion of Our Lord. Robin's got one, too.
MRS ROOKWOOD : But you're not going with him. You haven't changed again.
ROOKWOOD : No. No. I've promised you. I shan't leave England. But a sword that must never be drawn except for the Faith—that's a sword even you would ask me to use—if it came to that——

MRS ROOKWOOD : You must forgive me, sweetheart, if sometimes I seem to fail you. But when God gave you to me, He must have meant me to cherish so sweet a gift. I have no other jealousy.

ROOKWOOD (*kissing her*) : Nor need ever have.

MRS ROOKWOOD : I'm brave in your arms.

[*They stay together for a moment without speaking. Then, very gently, she breaks away.*]

MRS ROOKWOOD : And I'll pay God's debt—by leaving them.

ROOKWOOD : Never, Bess. Never.

MRS ROOKWOOD : No. Not that. We are each other's always. But part of the price is to let go in little things. Go to London. Come back when you will. I shall be here, unless there should be some necessity for me to go home. Then you will find me there.

ROOKWOOD : But suppose I could not get to you ?

MRS ROOKWOOD : How could that be ?

ROOKWOOD : Of course not. It was a sick fancy. Love makes one afraid.

MRS ROOKWOOD : That is what I was trying to say. There's safety only when it's bound to God. We've known that since we were children—in words. The priest said it when he married us——

ROOKWOOD : Yes. I remember——

MRS ROOKWOOD : But now we've got to the meaning. I think my love is great enough to let you do what you must.

ROOKWOOD : What " must " ?

MRS ROOKWOOD : That I don't know. That's been my fear—that shadowy something. If it was a known thing it would be easier. But you do not tell me and now I do not ask. Go and find your new sword. Only keep it for Christ.

*Curtain.*

# ACT TWO

## *Scene 1*

*The same, ten days later. As the curtain rises, Lady Catesby and Father Tesimond, dressed ordinarily as we first saw him, come in from the courtyard door, talking.*

LADY CATESBY : It's an empty house, Father, without them all. And this—waiting ! But the ceremony should be over by now and to-morrow they'll be back.
TESIMOND : And then our fears may seem foolishness.
LADY CATESBY : God grant it ! . . . If only there were someone Robin would follow and obey——
TESIMOND : Your son, I think, is one of those who are born to lead.
LADY CATESBY : No, Father. I know him. Better than anyone. Better even than you. He's not the proud, self-sure man you all see. Fearless, wild—yes, he was always that. The Catesby strain. But seeking in his heart only for someone to claim his obedience. And when Essex failed—you know of that ?
TESIMOND : Only from common knowledge—that he was with Essex in the rising four years ago and suffered for it. D'you mean that when the Queen killed Essex——
LADY CATESBY : No. It was over then. Robin trusted Essex and would have died for him. And that day in London when all was lost, he saw his idol as he was—a weak, ambitious coward. All knew then that Robin, with his wounds and his courage, was the better man. Since then, he's followed no one and trusted no one, though many have trusted and followed him. That's a burden, Father, that we can't know—to ask to give but to be made to take. If only he would be guided by you ! But you mustn't think him rebellious at heart.

TESIMOND : I don't. But I'm fortunate in being able to give my loyalty to Father Garnet. That's peace for all of us.

LADY CATESBY : Father Garnet. Yes. What is it he wants for the chapel at Coughton ? A wafer box and——

[*She goes over to the chapel and opens it.*]

TESIMOND : Only if you can spare it. But we remembered you had two here and he thought——

LADY CATESBY : Of course. The silver one. Take it now.

[*She takes it out of the chapel and gives it to him.*]

TESIMOND : A red chasuble—if you had more than one.

LADY CATESBY : Yes, we have. That's in a chest among my silks. The pursuivants don't search there.

[*She closes the chapel.*]

We'll find it at once.

TESIMOND : We are so greatly in your debt.

LADY CATESBY : How can that be, compared with what you risk for us ?

TESIMOND : I mean all the care all of you have for us. Without the laity, there could be no priest untaken——

[*He holds the door for her to go out and follows her. As the door closes we hear the clatter of horses and, in a moment, Catesby and Winter, dishevelled, spattered with mud, rush in. Catesby is crossing the room to go straight out by the other door, when he pauses and turns back to Winter.*]

CATESBY : I can't tell her, Tom.

WINTER : But you must. She can't stay here.

CATESBY: I mean the whole truth. Enough only to get her away.

WINTER: What's the good of hiding things any more? She may as well know now as to-morrow. All England will know then.

CATESBY: But to-morrow I should not have to face her when she learns it. How long do you think we've got?

WINTER: Twenty-four hours perhaps.

CATESBY: That's something. We can spend to-morrow raising what force we can about here. We've at least time to get in some more arms and powder. We should be able to hold them off for a week and by that time who knows? Digby's a thousand men on Dunsmore Heath. If only your brother can get Talbot to help, and the Littletons come in, we could still turn the tide. If we hold here to cover a retreat to Lancashire or Wales, and——

WINTER: Robin, your mother's still here and in danger and Bess Rookwood——

CATESBY: Without Rookwood's horses we should have been trapped in London. D'you think he's taken?

WINTER: No. He's kept the fastest so that he could stay till the last and bring the latest news. I meant that honour for myself, but he was so insistent, so I left as soon as I heard that the King ordered a search of the cellars when Cecil gave him the letter. . . . Robin, it's your mother——

CATESBY: Yes. I know.

[*He opens the door, starts to go through it, then falls back in surprise. Father Tesimond enters.*]

CATESBY: Father Tesimond! You—here?

WINTER: We thought you were with Father Garnet at Coughton——

CATESBY : He's not been taken ?
TESIMOND : No. Father Garnet was well enough when I left him. He sent me over here as a last attempt to make you see reason. I see I am too late.
CATESBY : } What have you heard ?
WINTER : } Surely there's no news——
TESIMOND : I've heard nothing : but I can see you're returning from an enterprise, not going to it.
CATESBY : Does my mother——
TESIMOND : Nothing is known. D'you wish to tell me ?
WINTER : We tried——
CATESBY (*stopping him*) : No. Father, will you do me one last service ?
TESIMOND : What is it ?
CATESBY : See my mother to safety.
TESIMOND : If anywhere is safe, surely here in her own house——
WINTER : Twenty-four hours is the most we have before the whole county is here in force to arrest us.
CATESBY : And we do not choose to be arrested. Nor do I wish to fight with women in the house.
TESIMOND : I see it is too late for words. How bad is it ?
CATESBY : As bad as it can be. We . . . we tried to raise London against the King—and failed. We are posted as traitors. But even now, if we——
TESIMOND : Tried to raise London ? You must have been out of your senses. How could you hope to do that ? And now your recklessness has put every Catholic in England in jeopardy. O, my son. . . . Is that all ?
CATESBY (*hard*) : You said, Father, that words were useless. Spare me a sermon. Only time counts now —and courage. You will take my mother somewhere to safety ?

[*Lady Catesby comes in through the open door.*]

LADY CATESBY : Why should I need that ? I am glad you've come home, Robin, though I did not expect you till to-morrow. I thought you were waiting till the opening of Parliament to-day.

CATESBY : Everything's miscarried, Mother.

WINTER : We had to leave before dawn to save our lives even so far.

TESIMOND : The mischief, Lady Catesby, is worse than we feared. They're proclaimed traitors for what they've attempted.

LADY CATESBY : What have you done ?

CATESBY : Mother, don't ask me now. We had a plan. It was a good plan, but it miscarried. Leave it there. Call it the fortune of war. Only, if you love me, don't stay here. You must go now. At once. Father Tesimond will take you——

[*The door is flung open and Rookwood comes in.*]

ROOKWOOD : Thank God you're here. I thought I should have overtaken you and I had missed you on the road. Lady Catesby. Father Tesimond. Where's Bess ? (*To Catesby.*) You haven't told her anything, have you ? I must be the one to tell her. Is she——

LADY CATESBY : She's gone home.

ROOKWOOD : Home ?

LADY CATESBY : To Coldham.

ROOKWOOD : But she promised me——

LADY CATESBY : Just after you'd gone a messenger came over with news that your little boy was sick. No, it was not dangerous, they said : only he kept crying for his mother. She said you would understand that she had to go and begged you to follow her as soon as you could.

ROOKWOOD : Yes, of course, I'll go at once. (*Suddenly realising.*) But I can't. . . . All the roads will be

watched. There's not a chance to get through. . . . (*He is stunned and turns almost like a child to Lady Catesby.*) . . . She was—well when she left?

LADY CATESBY (*putting her hand on his arm*): Yes, Ambrose, quite well——

WINTER (*in an even, casual voice*): How were things in London?

ROOKWOOD: Fawkes is taken—but you know that?

CATESBY: Only by rumour. It's certain?

ROOKWOOD: Quite. I saw him. I was in the crowd. They were pelting him with stones. He seemed not to care.

WINTER: Where were they taking him?

ROOKWOOD: I don't know. The Tower, I suppose.

CATESBY: More likely to Cecil's. The crowd was violent?

ROOKWOOD: It had been roused, I think. The news had spread that the Papists had planned to murder——

LADY CATESBY: Murder? O, Robin——

CATESBY: Mother, if you love me——

LADY CATESBY: If *I* love *you*——

CATESBY: Please, not now. Nothing can be mended. Think what you must. Disown me, if you must. Only go before it's too late. I cannot have you hurt, Mother. Spare me that. (*With both her hands in his, he turns to Tesimond.*) Tell her that it is right for her to go.

TESIMOND: Yes, Lady Catesby, I think you should leave here. If you will come with me to Coughton, we can make our way from there.

LADY CATESBY: If you say so, Father——

CATESBY: Thank you. (*He puts his head down to kiss his mother. She strokes his hair.*)

LADY CATESBY: You have all my prayers. If you have lost your honour, keep your courage.

CATESBY: You need never doubt that.

LADY CATESBY: And may God forgive you. (*To Tesimond as she goes out.*) I'll be ready very soon.

[*She goes out.*]

ROOKWOOD: If only I could get to Coldham——
WINTER: That's impossible. You would be taken at once. If we fight here there is at least a chance——
ROOKWOOD: There's no chance. I shall never see her again—never——
TESIMOND: On earth. That may be your penance.
CATESBY (*suddenly*): Father, you know everything. Are you with us now?
WINTER: Everything?

[*Tesimond looks at Catesby, who nods and says:*]

CATESBY: I give you leave.
TESIMOND (*to Winter and Rookwood, as Catesby turns to the window*): He told me it all in confession; but, as you know, I could not break the seal even so much as to speak of it to him outside the confessional without his leave. Father Garnet and I have done all in our power—but it's too late now. You purposed a most wicked thing. You know that. But at least you can thank God that you have been saved actual blood-guiltiness.
ROOKWOOD: That is so, is it not? No one has been harmed.
WINTER: No one—but Fawkes.
TESIMOND: No blood shed?
WINTER: Ours will be.
ROOKWOOD: That's a penance too.
CATESBY (*turning*): What we did was for the Faith.
TESIMOND: And you have brought it into the most dire jeopardy by trying to take the law into your own hands. "Vengeance is mine," saith the Lord. "I will recompense."

CATESBY : Yes. Yes. But, Father, will you stand with us now ?

TESIMOND : What can I do ?

CATESBY : When you have taken my mother to her sister's house, go on to Grafton. Win Talbot over. You could. He'd obey you. And with him, every Catholic in England will rise. That would be fair fight and by God's help we'd win. There are enough horses, armour and ammunition in our houses here in the Midlands to equip some regiments. Act quickly and we surprise the State. We'll hold them off here to give you time. Will you do this, Father ?

TESIMOND : I could do nothing without Father Garnet's permission. I doubt if he——

CATESBY : There's no time for that. Every second's precious now.

TESIMOND : I am a priest, under orders——

CATESBY : An Englishman who might have been a soldier——

TESIMOND : It would make me your accomplice——

CATESBY : That is over. This is a new danger.

TESIMOND : I promise you this. I will do all I can for the best.

[*He goes out by the door into the house.*]

CATESBY : There goes a gentleman who will live and die with us. He will do it. Come, Tom, we must see to the defence of the house. My mother must have some of the servants with her, and the gatehouse. . . .

[*Catesby and Winter go out by the door they came in. Catesby at the door turns and speaks to Rookwood :*]

CATESBY : Ambrose, you'd better come and settle about the horses——

ROOKWOOD : In a moment, Robin.

*Left alone he draws his sword and feels the blade. His gestures are not extravagant, but it should be clear that he has suicide in his mind. Then, while he is looking at it, his eyes fasten on the engraving on the hilt. He kisses it, puts it back in its scabbard and is about to follow the others as :*

*The Curtain falls.*

## *Scene 2*

*Cecil's room at four in the morning of November 5. Fawkes, with his hands tied behind his back, his clothes torn and dishevelled, some blood on his face from a cut, is standing between two guards in front of Cecil who is seated. (Cecil's own account of Fawkes's demeanour on this occasion is that he " was no more dismayed—nay, scarce any more troubled—than if he were taken for a poor robbery on the highway ".)*

CECIL : So you persist in your denial that there were others with you in this unspeakable villainy ?
FAWKES : Your men have told you they found me alone.
CECIL : I know that. But the plan——
FAWKES : Was mine.
CECIL : The cellar was not yours.
FAWKES : It was my master's.
CECIL : Then he must have known of this ? He was your accomplice ?
FAWKES : No. He has been away in the North for many weeks. He knew nothing——
CECIL : Master Johnson . . . that *is* your name ?
FAWKES : I have told you so.
CECIL : Johnson, do you know Robert Catesby ?
FAWKES : I have heard of him.

CECIL : You know him well, do you not ?
FAWKES : No.
CECIL : Are you certain ? He is a leading Catholic. It would be strange if you did not know him.
FAWKES : I may have met him. I have met many people. I can't remember them all. I have now met you, but I do not know you.
CECIL : That will be remedied. Meanwhile you would be wise to show more respect.
FAWKES : If I had respected any of you I should have made different plans.
CECIL : If you persist in your obduracy and show no signs of repentance——
FAWKES : I repent with all my heart——
CECIL : So you change your tune at last !
FAWKES : ——that my plan did not succeed.

[*Cecil goes over to him and puts his hand on his arm. Fawkes tries to shake him off.*]

CECIL : Insolent. Do not forget you are now in my power.
FAWKES : For a little while, yes. But when you kill me I shall be free again.
CECIL : The interim will not be comfortable.
FAWKES : I am a soldier——
CECIL : Who will not die a quick or a clean death.

[*Cecil resumes his seat.*]

CECIL : You and your accomplices plotted this treason against our most gracious sovereign King James.
FAWKES : I have told you I am alone in this. May not an Englishman try to rid his country of locusts by blowing James of Scotland and his rabble of Scottish beggars back to their native mountains ?

CECIL : Your jest is ill-timed. Or do you offer that as a new reason ?

FAWKES : It would be as good as any, if already in this last hour I had not again and again told you the truth. Must I say it again ?

CECIL : You mean you admit your treason.

FAWKES : There can be no treason where there is no allegiance. As I have said, to me James of Scotland is a heretic and therefore no rightful king.

CECIL : But even so you are bound by the general law of humanity.

FAWKES : As you are.

CECIL : Unnatural monsters such as you forfeit your appeal to it.

FAWKES : As you do.

CECIL (*controlling himself with a great effort*) : I am the instrument of justice.

FAWKES : As I should have been.

CECIL (*a swift change of tone*) : When did you last see Catesby ?

FAWKES : I do not know Master Catesby.

CECIL : And Thomas Winter ? And Ambrose Rookwood ?

FAWKES : Who are they ?

CECIL : You know well enough, Guy Fawkes.

FAWKES : My name is John Johnson.

CECIL : Your name is Guy Fawkes. Are you such a fool as to suppose I don't know everything ? Listen. (*He reads from a paper.*) " I, Guy Fawkes, gentleman of York, confess that about Easter twelve months, Robert Catesby, Thomas Winter and Thomas Percy first propounded to me a practice against His Majesty whereby the Upper House of Parliament with the King, Lords and Commons assembled should be blown up with gunpowder. To this end Percy hired a cellar of which I was the pretended keeper and into

it we brought twenty barrels of powder. About Easter this year, the Parliament being prorogued till October we dispersed ourselves and I returned to the Low Countries. I returned about the beginning of September and we brought in more powder, some of that we had there having become damp ; and I went into the country till October the thirtieth.

" Concerning Duke Charles, the King's second son, we had sundry consultations how to seize on his person——"

FAWKES : I did not write this.

CECIL : But it is the truth and you will sign it, Master Fawkes.

[*Cecil holds out a pen and motions to the guards to untie Fawkes's hands; but before they can do so, Fawkes replies and they do not in fact release him.*]

FAWKES : I will never sign such a thing.

CECIL : You will sign ; but it would save us both trouble if you would do so now, before we have to make you. Catesby and Winter have both confessed.

FAWKES : You lie. They would never——

CECIL : So you *do* know them ? When did you last see them, Master Fawkes ?

FAWKES : I do not know them. I——

CECIL : You remember yourself too late, Master Fawkes. Now you will remember other things. Many other things, Master Fawkes. And you will sign this, even if your writing is a little strange when we have racked your fingers from their sockets.

[*Cecil holds out the pen again. Fawkes shakes his head negatively.*]

CECIL : It is easy to be brave now. You do not know what the torture is.

FAWKES : No. And I do not know what it will do to

me. But I protest here that, whatever I may be made to say in my pain, this work of mine had no object but to protect the Catholic Faith and to punish its bloody persecutors. I am no traitor, since I do not acknowledge the King's title. Nor am I a murderer, but a soldier in a just cause, which for the moment has failed.

CECIL : A fiend in the Devil's cause, whose unnatural fiendishness God in His infinite wisdom and mercy has allowed to be caught in the toils of his own wickedness.

FAWKES : (*with great dignity, as if dismissing Cecil*) : Let us leave words, my lord. They can serve neither of us NOW.

CECIL : On the contrary, I shall hear many more words from you which will serve me greatly. (*To the guards.*) For the present, take him to the Tower and put him in Little Ease. . . . And let Lord Monteagle come in.

[*Fawkes and the guards go out; Monteagle enters.*]

MONTEAGLE : It all goes well, my lord ?

CECIL : Excellently. And with you ? You found the King gracious ?

MONTEAGLE : His Majesty overwhelmed me. A pension for life—the restoration of all my estates—never can there have been such rewards for the mere delivery of a letter !

[*Monteagle laughs.*]

CECIL : Never can there have been such a letter. And if at any time you should need other help, you will find the State is still grateful. . . . You saw to the other arrangements ?

MONTEAGLE : Yes, that too is satisfactory. The men

have been about the streets the last hour; now the whole city's roused; the sky's red with bonfires. Look.

[*Monteagle draws the curtain from the window and a red reflection glows into the room. There is a faint murmur of crowd noises. Cecil goes to the window and opens it and the noises become louder and more distinct, though, in spite of our being able to hear words, we are still conscious that we are overlooking the Strand from a height.*]

CROWD: Death to all Papists! Long live King James! Here's a toast—long live the King and may all Catholics roast in their own flames! etc.

[*Then a drunken voice calls:*]

And here's a song for you: all of you now:

Remember, remember the fifth of November,
Gunpowder-Treason and plot.

[*They all take up*, " Gunpowder-Treason and plot ".]

I see no reason why Gunpowder-Treason
Should ever be forgot.

[*As they repeat* " should ever be forgot ", *Cecil closes the window.*]

CECIL: I see no reason, either, do you, Lord Monteagle? Those fires will burn Papistry out of England at last.

*As Cecil stands at the window, his face reddened by the glow*

*The Curtain falls.*

## *Scene 3*

*The Catesbys' house, four days later. Catesby, Rookwood and a young servant are in the room when the Curtain rises. The table is piled with arms—muskets, pistols, breast-plates, etc. As the Curtain goes up, Catesby and Rookwood are cleaning firearms: the servant is pouring them out flagons of ale.*

CATESBY : Pour one for yourself, Dick.
DICK : It doesn't matter, sir.
CATESBY : You'd better.
DICK : Thank you, sir. (*He does so.*)
CATESBY : You're not afraid ?
DICK : No, sir. Not very.
CATESBY : Good. You'll find everything's all right when it starts. It's the waiting that's difficult. Remember to keep well under cover behind that corner of the courtyard wall, as I showed you——
ROOKWOOD : He's in the turret——
CATESBY : No. That's John's place. I arranged that this morning. John's a better shot than you are, Dick—but that's only because he's older and has had more experience. You'll out-shoot him one day.
ROOKWOOD : John's gone——
CATESBY : *John ?* Surely not. It was only an hour ago that we were talking——
ROOKWOOD : He went about twenty minutes ago. When you were upstairs. I asked him to wait for you, but he said he daren't : he knew if he saw you he'd stay.
CATESBY : Then it was right for him to go. I told everyone to go who wanted : though I thought——
ROOKWOOD : It was his wife and children.
CATESBY : Then Dick, you can take his place in the turret. Unless you want to go, too. There's still

time, you know. And you're quite free to. I shan't blame you. None of us will.

DICK : No, sir. I'd rather stay with you.

CATESBY : Thank you. Brave boy ! Then you'd best go and practise your shots in the courtyard. You can have my pistol. (*Giving it to him.*) And get some powder from the Armoury. Is it dry now ?

DICK : Most of it was, sir, last time I looked.

CATESBY : Good. Tell them to keep the fire well up.

DICK : Yes, sir.

CATESBY (*as the servant goes out*) : How many of you are left ?

DICK : Five of us servants, sir. There's Master Henry and——

CATESBY : No, I'll not know who.

[*He makes a gesture of dismissal and the servant goes out. For a moment there is silence between the two who are left.*]

CATESBY (*suddenly*) : Ambrose, is there anything you want to say to me ?

ROOKWOOD : No, Robin. What should there be ?

CATESBY : Perhaps a word of pardon.

ROOKWOOD : For what ?

CATESBY : That I have brought you to this. That I may have taken your life.

ROOKWOOD : Not you. I made my own choice. And if we are to die to-day, do you rate me as less than Dick ? . . . There is only one thing. You are still certain ?

CATESBY : That I was right ? Yes. In spite of all that has happened. Any enterprise may miscarry. Anything we Catholics do may be turned against us. If we follow our religion, we are traitors. If we compromise, we are weak apostates. If we fight, we are rebels. If we are peaceable, we are cowards ready for

the final crushing. So, if we are wrong every way, let us fight.

ROOKWOOD : I don't mean that—or now. I meant our attempt to kill.

CATESBY (*dismissing it*) : That ? No, don't let us talk of it again. As Father Tesimond said before he left no one has been hurt. Not a hair of anyone's head, innocent or guilty. Except Fawkes.

[*He shivers slightly, thinking of it: and is silent.*]

ROOKWOOD : Then, if you could, you would do it again ?

CATESBY : Of course. Though perhaps next time I shall act alone.

[*Winter comes in.*]

CATESBY : Good. You're back. What news ? How many are there with you ?

WINTER (*shaking his head*) : No one. Nothing. No one will help.

ROOKWOOD : No one ?

WINTER : No.

CATESBY : Not Talbot ?

ROOKWOOD : Did Father Tesimond go to him ?

WINTER : Yes, Father Tesimond went. But it was no use. They say he rode away towards Lancashire more like a soldier than a priest.

CATESBY : What did Talbot say to you ?

WINTER : He wouldn't see me. He only sent a message that we did not know him at all if we thought we could make him a traitor to the King, and to beg me, if I had any regard for him, to go away at once, since my being there might endanger his life.

CATESBY : He's old, so he values it. But surely there are *some ?*

WINTER : No, it's the same everywhere. The countryside's sullen. And Catholics are the worst of all. They curse us for having brought this on them. We're posted for traitors everywhere. Catholic houses are being sacked by the mobs.

ROOKWOOD : Then we're caught here.

WINTER : That's to be seen, but the Sheriff has about five hundred men on their way over. I was afraid I might be taken before I got here. They say some of our men have been, who left.

CATESBY : And you came back ?

WINTER : Of course.

CATESBY : Why ?

WINTER : To die with you. . . . How many have we ?

ROOKWOOD : All told, about a dozen.

CATESBY : Against five hundred. They're well armed, you say ?

WINTER : Sufficiently.

CATESBY : Our ammunition will account for some. The powder ought to be dry now.

WINTER : What powder ?

CATESBY : What we took yesterday from Whewell Grange. Of course, you don't know. I forgot. Ambrose and I led a party over there. Windsor was away. So we borrowed some of his arms and a cart-load of powder. But it got soaked. It was an open cart, and you know what the rain was like. We've spread it on the Armoury floor to-day. It should be all right now. If there's so little time, we'd better go and see to it.

[*Catesby and Rookwood go out. Winter pours himself out some ale and drinks it. Dick comes in with the pistol in his hand.*]

DICK : I hit the mark eight times out of ten, sir.

WINTER : It was you, was it ? You nearly hit me as I came through the postern.
DICK : O, sir——
WINTER : It's all right. You didn't. But see you don't miss the Sheriff's men.
DICK : Master Catesby says I'm to be in the turret. I should see them well from there. Where is he, sir ?
WINTER : He's gone to the Armoury.

[*We hear a tremendous explosion.*]

WINTER : Dear God !
DICK: The powder.
WINTER : Quickly.

[*They rush out as the Curtain falls to denote the passing of an hour. It rises again at once, revealing Winter, Catesby and Rookwood, the two latter bandaged and obviously in pain.*]

WINTER (*attending to Rookwood's face, whose pain makes him flinch.*) : You are fortunate to have your sight. Is that easier ?
ROOKWOOD : A little. Thank you.
CATESBY : And I'm fortunate to have my sword-arm. My left hand's raw, I think.
WINTER : And your eyes ?
CATESBY : They'll last—as long as I need them. It can't be many minutes now. (*Looking round for him, as if half-blind.*) Tom.
WINTER : Yes, Robin.
CATESBY : Tell Dick to come down and tell us as soon as he sees them coming.
WINTER : Yes.

[*He starts to go out.*

CATESBY : And then I want to speak to them all out there. (*Indicating the courtyard entrance.*)
WINTER : Yes.

[*He goes out. Rookwood gives a slight groan, which he stifles instantly.*]

CATESBY : I know. It's almost unendurable.

[*Catesby goes across to him, uncertainly, and takes his hand.*]

CATESBY : Now I unsay it all.
ROOKWOOD : We were wrong ?
CATESBY : *I* was wrong. You are guiltless. All of you but me. The sin is on my soul. But it's God's mercy to let my body know a little of what I should have done to others, so that I understand and can repent. A stray spark on a little gunpowder. What would the other have been ? . . . There's no priest here. . . . No absolution. . . .
ROOKWOOD : It would not be withheld. God is merciful, Robin.
CATESBY : Pray for me.
ROOKWOOD : Of course. And you for me : that I die well—even though I may know the time of it.
CATESBY : What do you mean ?
ROOKWOOD : The time of my death. We have no powder now. We may be taken alive.
CATESBY : No. Never. That must not be. To be maimed in the Tower by Cecil's butchers ; to be dragged on a hurdle through the streets to the gallows. No, God won't ask that, even for my wickedness and pride and folly. I'll not be taken alive. You must not be.
ROOKWOOD : It's in God's hand. Best pray.

[*They are silent, but their lips work in prayer. Winter returns with Dick.*]

DICK : They've just come over the hill.
CATESBY : Thank you, boy. How many ?
DICK : I'm not good at judging. But hundreds, I think. I'm not frightened now, sir.
CATESBY : You'll live to be a soldier. You've some powder left ?
DICK : A little, sir. Do you want your pistol now ?
CATESBY : No, keep it. That makes you the strongest of us. Shoot straight, but when the powder's gone surrender. Tell them that you were forced into this by me.
DICK : But that's not true, sir.
CATESBY : It's my orders to you. My last. And that lie will be on my conscience. Are the rest together out there ?
DICK : Yes, sir.

[*The servant goes out. Winter helps Catesby slowly to the door. Rookwood does not move. Catesby takes the gold crucifix from his neck and crosses himself with it. Then, after kissing it, he holds it up and speaks loudly to those outside.*]

CATESBY : My friends, here before you all I, Robert Catesby, solemnly affirm that I have done what I have done only for the honour of the Cross and the exaltation of that Faith which honours the Cross, and for the saving of souls in that Faith. But now I see that it is not God's will that it should succeed in the manner I intended, or at this time. I die repentant and calling on God for mercy at His judgment ; but since we know there can be neither mercy nor justice at the hands of our enemies, I shall fight here that I may not be taken to their judgment. For that reason only I shall defend myself with my sword. I will not be taken alive. When I am dead, surrender. You will

not be harmed, for the servant cannot be blamed for the master's fault. Now to your places and may God defend you all and recompense you; and may He have mercy on our souls.

[*He makes the sign of the Cross over them with his crucifix; then puts it back round his neck. In the distance a clock strikes noon. Catesby and Winter come back into the room. Rookwood has risen. They stand together and say the Hail, Mary.*]

CATESBY: Hail, Mary, full of grace——
ALL: ——the Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou among women and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.
CATESBY: Holy Mary, Mother of God——
ALL: ——pray for us sinners now and at the hour of our death.
CATESBY: Pray for us, Holy Mother of God.
THE OTHER TWO: That we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.
CATESBY: Pour Thy grace into our hearts we beseech Thee, O Lord, that as we have known the Incarnation of Thy Son, Jesus Christ, by the message of an angel, so by His Cross and Passion, we may be brought to the glory of His Resurrection.
ALL: Amen.

[*During this last prayer, the noise outside has gradually increased and, breaking into the "Amen" comes the Sheriff's voice. It is clear enough but we are aware of the distance of the courtyard between.*]

SHERIFF'S VOICE: Open in the King's name.

[*The three men clasp hands and draw their swords.*]

SHERIFF'S VOICE: Robert Catesby, traitor to His

Majesty King James and author of the most horrid villainy that has been heard of in the memory of man, I command you, with your accomplices in this vile treason, to yield and submit yourselves to justice.

[*They move together to the door.*]

CATESBY : We have resolved to yield ourselves to no man but to death as the messenger of God.

[*As he goes out:*]

Here I am !

[*They all go out. For a moment or two we hear the sounds of the assault. In the confusion we distinguish:*]

CATESBY'S VOICE : Tom, to me !
WINTER'S VOICE : They've got me in the shoulder. I can't use my sword.
ROOKWOOD'S VOICE : Robin ! Robin !

[*Then Catesby comes back, mortally wounded. By an enormous effort of will, he struggles on his knees across the room to the image of Our Lady, reaches it, " and so, embracing and kissing the same, he died. "*]

*Curtain.*

# EPILOGUE

*Cecil's room, ten weeks later. Cecil and Monteagle are talking.*

CECIL : I shall not intrude my presence on them, my dear Lord, until the procession has passed. Then courtesy, if nothing else, would make it imperative at least to greet them.

MONTEAGLE : They would not, I think, resent your presence. They understand the needs of justice and Mistress Rookwood is too grateful for your allowing this.

CECIL : Her gratitude should be to you. I should not have made an exception for the Rookwoods had you not so eloquently pleaded for it. But when *you* ask—as I promised you—the State listens——

MONTEAGLE : Yes . . . yes. . . .

CECIL : But I confess it is to me a curious request. The variety of natures is a strange study. I flatter myself that I understand the ways of most, but this baffles even me. If one I loved was being dragged through London on a hurdle to his death, I should not wish to see him. Do you understand it ?

MONTEAGLE : Your Lordship will remember that I have been a Catholic.

CECIL : By the way, you will be pleased to hear that we have got Father Garnet. Yesterday. They smoked him out of one of the priest's holes in Lancashire. So now we have everything.

[*Far off we hear the sound of the crowds.*]

CECIL : That sounds as if they are getting near. On a clear, cold day like this, of course, sound carries : but they can hardly be further than Temple Bar. (*Almost to himself.*) I wonder if they will notice the heads of their friends we executed yesterday. I will leave you, my Lord, for the moment.

[*Cecil goes out. Monteagle puts the two chairs near the window, which he opens. Then he goes out and returns immediately with Lady Catesby and Mrs Rookwood. Lady Catesby ignores him.*]

MRS ROOKWOOD : It is good of you, Lord Monteagle, to have made this possible.

MONTEAGLE : Lord Salisbury was happy to allow it in your case. No other prisoners have been permitted such consolation.

MRS ROOKWOOD : Ambrose knows ?

MONTEAGLE : Yes. He sent a message that he is keeping his eyes closed to prevent distraction from his prayers : but one of the guards walking beside his hurdle will tell him when he is below this window.

MRS ROOKWOOD : Is he the first ?

MONTEAGLE : No. First, Tom Winter : then Ambrose : then Fawkes.

LADY CATESBY : Robin would have been the first.

MONTEAGLE : I will leave you.

LADY CATESBY : Why, William ?

MONTEAGLE : You would rather be alone.

LADY CATESBY : Are you afraid to look ?

[*Monteagle goes out. Mrs Rookwood turns away from the window to Lady Catesby.*]

MRS ROOKWOOD : You think it will give him courage ?

LADY CATESBY : I know. He will see you again—on earth. (*Answering her look.*) Something he said the day he came back. It will be like an absolution for him. And for Robin. (*Again answering her mute question.*) It is all one death, Bess : each for the other for all of us. . . . We pay by living. . . . Now !

[*Mrs Rookwood gets up and stands at the window : Lady Catesby falls a little behind her in the background. We hear Rookwood's voice :*]

ROOKWOOD (*off*) : Bess ! Bess !

MRS ROOKWOOD : I am here.

ROOKWOOD (*off*) : Pray for me, Bess ! Pray for me !

MRS ROOKWOOD : I will and be of good courage and offer yourself wholly to God. I, for my part, do as freely give you back to God as He once gave you to me.

[*There is no answer, for the hurdle has gone on and all we hear is the crowd :* " Death to the traitors." *Mrs Rookwood turns almost collapsing to Lady Catesby, who puts her arm round her protectively. Cecil enters quietly.*]

CECIL : If you would care to refresh yourselves in the next room——

[*Mrs Rookwood sobs quietly.*]

You will forgive my presence, Lady Catesby : and know that, in the course of justice, there are many things——

LADY CATESBY (*cutting him short*) : It is our consolation, my lord, that all of us must appear before another Judge.

*Quick Curtain.*

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